

“MISSION 66”:

**Modernism and the National Park Dilemma
in the United States, 1945-1972**

by Ethan Carr

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at the Edinburgh College of Art
in fulfilment of the requirements for the

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME I OF II

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Abstract

"Mission 66" was a National Park Service design and construction program intended to revitalize the American national park system through a ten-year program of capital investment and land acquisition from 1956 to 1966. The built legacy of the Mission 66 program includes over one hundred visitor centres (a building type invented by Mission 66 planners), hundreds of employee residences (based on standardized plans), and innumerable comfort stations, campgrounds, maintenance facilities, road improvements, bridges, entrance stations, and service stations. Most of these buildings were modernist in design inspiration, contrasting with prewar "rustic" park architecture. Utilities and concessioner developments were also built through Mission 66. Park planning emphasized new park units in coastal areas (national seashores), around reservoirs (national recreation areas), and at historic sites (national historical parks). During this period National Park Service staff was enlarged, uniforms were modernized, and the arrowhead logo (devised in 1951) became the ubiquitous symbol of the agency.

This thesis attempts 1) to give a thorough historical context for this era of American national park planning and development, 2) to explore research questions relating to assessments of the historical significance of this legacy of buildings and built landscapes, 3) to establish how this period of American landscape architecture influenced and continues to affect the current situation (or "dilemma") of the American national park system.

It is argued that this period of national park design and development was significantly influenced by contemporary trends in American landscape architecture, architecture, and museum ("visitor centre") design. It is concluded that national park development of the Mission 66 era (1945-1972) was the last, comprehensive program of its type and therefore must be understood in order to better assess park planning, design, and management issues today. It is also argued that essential aspects of the visiting public's interaction with national parks and historic sites were reformed during the Mission 66 era, and that an understanding of the Mission 66 era park design therefore

also is necessary for a fuller appreciation of the expectations and conceptualizations many park visitors bring with them to national parks today.

Literature review and methodology research at the beginning of this project emphasized historical contexts and historical research methodologies and theory. This phase of the project led to the formulation of research questions and methods. Subsequent research involved the use of primary sources (especially the National Archives in College Park, Maryland), site visits (to dozens of parks over a four-year period), oral histories, and quantitative analysis of National Park Service budgets and other statistics. This study was supported in part by a grant from the (U.S.) National Park Service.

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Acknowledgements

Professors Simon Bell and Catherine Ward-Thompson encouraged, supported, and oversaw this research project, and I am indebted to them for their contributions and patience.

Much of the research and travel for this project was supported through a National Park Service grant. The results of this work will be part of the National Park Service's larger effort to evaluate the historical significance of Mission 66 era development, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended). A committee of National Park Service officials and historians reviewed portions of this work.

In addition to the National Archives in Washington, DC, many smaller archives provided vital primary documents from which this history of Mission 66 has been assembled. Individual national parks often conserve many records, images, and even transcriptions of oral history projects. The National Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center, in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, conserves a particularly vital archive of Mission 66 era documents, interviews, images, and publications. Conrad L. Wirth's personal papers are conserved at the University of Wyoming, Laramie.

The University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, Massachusetts, has also supported this work by giving me the needed time to complete this research while teaching in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning. I am indebted to the faculty and graduate students who contributed to the ideas in this study.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 “MISSION 66”

The developed areas of the American national park system are primarily the result of two busy periods of modernization overseen by the National Park Service. While older parks, such as Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Canyon, boast hotels and other remnants from the earlier railroad era, the construction of the modern national park system began in the mid-1920s when Congress approved generous appropriations for the development of public facilities. This was the “rustic” era of park architecture and landscape design. Park Service designers and engineers developed a unique approach to what they described as “harmonious” site development. During the 1930s the agency oversaw the expansion and development not only of the national park system, but of almost every state park system in the United States. World War II, followed by low postwar budgets, caused an extended hiatus in federal park sponsorship. When Congress was again ready to ratchet up park spending in the mid-1950s, a second major wave of national park development occurred. This postwar era of park development was structured around a ten-year program proposed in 1955 by Park Service director Conrad L. Wirth. Characterized by Wirth as “MISSION 66,” the program was intended to modernize, enlarge, and even reinvent the park system by 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the Park Service.

1.2 Gaps in Knowledge

The extensive redevelopment of American national parks that occurred between 1945 and 1972—especially between 1956 and 1966—has been the subject of little serious scholarship. Although historians have focused on the prewar, rustic era of architecture and American national park development, reactions to postwar modernist design in American national parks have always been mixed. Criticism of modernist design in national parks began as early as the 1950s and negative perceptions intensified greatly in the 1980s. Since then, the Mission 66 era (defined here as 1945 to 1972) has often been described as a period in which the Park Service betrayed its own design tradition: an aberrant episode that ended once Park Service architects and their consultants once again devised rustic façades for new buildings. Critics have also scoffed at the assertion that

Mission 66 was a preservation program that attempted to achieve its goals through development. To many this was a dark and impossible contradiction that sometimes resulted in tragic overdevelopment. Mission 66 has been denounced for poor planning—visitor centres too close to park “resources,” for example—and low quality construction materials and techniques that made use of prefabricated elements and standardized designs.

My thesis topic developed from a series of research questions based on the many mischaracterizations and extensive misinformation surrounding Mission 66. Why were so many people so upset about development in the nation’s parks at a time when new facilities were desperately needed? Considering that most national park planners and many top agency officials were landscape architects during the Mission 66 era, what would a more thorough examination of the period reveal about this profession during the postwar era, when it was going through great changes in the United States? Even a casual familiarity with the American national park system indicates that much of the infrastructure (utilities and roads, for example) and many of the public facilities (visitor centres, campgrounds, and lodges, for example) date to the Mission 66 era. How do current attitudes and perceptions of Mission 66, and modernism generally, affect planning and design today? Mission 66 accelerated and helped define the environmental movement in the United States by causing widespread concern among conservation organizations that national parks were being overdeveloped. How did Mission 66 help turn groups like the Sierra Club into modern, environmental activists, and how did the changing relationship with these private non-profit groups change the subsequent operations of the Park Service? Why did postwar park development look modernist, while prewar had been rustic? The two styles look different, but how different were they really, in terms of the goals, meaning, and methods of national park development?

The existing literature provides no ready answers to my research questions. The history of Mission 66 has been perceived and discussed largely through the writings (and along the biases) of the generation that directly participated in the controversies of the day. On the one hand, Conrad Wirth wrote the most thorough history of Mission 66 in his 1981 memoirs. On the other, environmental groups denounced Mission 66 for decades, mainly through magazine articles. Debates about Mission 66 continue but they parrot points of view and (often erroneous) information that has been passed down since the 1950s. Objective administrative or design histories of the program do not exist.

The lack of a thorough historical understanding of Mission 66 based on primary sources reflects a more general paucity of reliable and analytical research on American postwar landscape architecture and planning. While mid-century architecture has been the subject of extensive historical surveys and monographs by leading architectural historians, the story of American landscape architecture and planning during these years remains less examined. This was the highpoint of modernist design in the United States, and the period when landscape architects attempted to adapt their profession to the new spirit and approach of modernism. Landscape architecture has had a unique relationship to American park planning ever since Frederick Law Olmsted first coined the name of the profession in the 1860s. How did the transformation of the profession in the 1950s affect Mission 66, and vice versa? Mission 66 involved a billion dollars spent on construction and land acquisition over a ten-year period. The program was conceived and implemented by a relatively small cadre of professionals, most prominently landscape architects. Why is it that none of the existing histories of postwar landscape architecture even mention Mission 66?

The scholarship on Mission 66 shares many of the deficiencies of contemporary literature on the postwar geography of the United States. While suburbanization has been studied extensively, the federal highway analogue to Mission 66—the Interstate Highway program—has received little attention from scholars. But the connections between federal highway and federal park planning in the twentieth century are essential for a more comprehensive understanding of Mission 66.

Finally, the potential effects of Mission 66 on the relationship of the visiting public, and the “nature” and “history” they experience, remain to be more closely considered and analyzed. By reconceiving and redeveloping the national park system, Mission 66 inevitably reinvented relationships between the parks and their public. What was the influence of the program, for example, on intensified attitudes towards the protection of the environment? This was the period in which the environmental movement emerged as a social phenomenon and a political force. Why do histories of environmentalism ignore Mission 66, except to roundly condemn it, generally without basing conclusions on original research or new information?

1.3 Findings in Context of Work in the Field

Discussion about Mission 66 greatly intensified in the late 1990s because many buildings and landscapes constructed during the period approached fifty years in age.

The Park Service therefore began to consider the potential of Mission 66 buildings, for example, as potentially significant historic resources.¹ Many Mission 66 facilities by that time also required renovation or replacement, also causing managers to consider the potential eligibility of buildings and landscapes affected for the National Register of Historic Places.

The effort to determine the historical significance of Mission 66 buildings became mired in irrelevant debates over the virtues of rustic versus modernist architecture in national park settings. Forty years had passed since the program ended, but those charged with managing its built legacy—and for planning future public facilities—still relied on memoirs and memories to assess potential historical significance. Discussion of the historical value of Mission 66 architecture, in other words, relapsed to the same terms and positions that had first been formulated during initial controversies about the program in the 1960s. It had not yet become history; Mission 66 was still being debated as if it were a current event. For historic preservation to occur, a required first step was missing: the subjects of preservation themselves needed first to pass into history.

This thesis attempts to become a major step in the process of developing a broader, more comprehensive understanding of Mission 66 and its place in history. By addressing the research questions outlined above, the findings of this thesis will raise the discussion of the historical significance of the built legacy Mission 66 from polemical debates regarding the virtues of rustic design versus modernist design to a historical appreciation of the role and place of the program in broader historical trends. The existing literature on national park history, the rise of environmentalism, and postwar geographic change in the United States have not provided this historical context. Existing literature does not critically examine American park design as a major factor in postwar culture. This thesis broadens the discussion of modernism in the United States to better indicate the wide variety of projects and individuals involved. In doing so, it also sheds new light on the origins and development of the environmental movement in the United States. Existing literature on environmentalism, although extensive, has not undertaken a serious and balanced assessment of the massive redevelopment of the national park system in the 1950s and 1960s.

¹ This type of survey of potential historic resources is required for American federal agencies under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended).

Chapter 2: Overview of the literature

The available literature on national park history corresponds to scholarship in many disciplines, all of which have been essential to the development of my research questions. As the following categories illustrate, my research method involved analysis of a wide variety of historical sources from several academic fields. This interdisciplinary approach allowed me to examine the topic from different perspectives over time, and to attempt a less biased evaluation of the Mission 66 program. Sources examined within each category include historical narratives, correspondence, office records, oral history, and contemporary studies.

2.1 National Park Narratives: The “National Park Idea”

The history of the origins of the American “national park idea” is nearly as iconic as the parks themselves. Thomas Jefferson, George Catlin, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmsted, and George Perkins Marsh (among others) have all been advanced as originators of a peculiarly American national park concept.² In 1917, Stephen Mather and his assistant, Horace M. Albright, promulgated the official version of the “birth of the national park idea,” which held that the inspiration arose spontaneously as a group of leading citizens and explorers sat around a campfire in Yellowstone country in the summer of 1870. The story appealed to Mather and Albright because it implied a “broad unselfish, public-spirited” origin for the “splendid patriotic national-park plan.”³ The Park Service commemorated this version of events as recently as 1972 (for the

² See Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 282-287; Hans Huth, *Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes* [1957] New Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 135, 148-149, 169; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* [1967] Third Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 100-107; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* [1979] Second Edition, Revised (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 11-15.

³ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1917 Annual Report*, 3-4. This annual report was written by Horace Albright, who used Chittenden and Langford as his sources for the history of Yellowstone. See Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive* [1895] New and Enlarged Edition, Entirely Revised (St. Paul: J. E. Haynes, 1927); Nathaniel Pitt Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone Park* [1905] Reprint (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972). For a more complete account of the creation of Yellowstone, see Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story* 2 vols. (Boulder: The Yellowstone Library and Museum Association in cooperation with Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), vol. 1, 84-173.

Yellowstone National Park centennial), but by then historians had already suggested that the “campfire story” had little factual basis. The establishment of early national parks, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Sequoia, was a more complex story. The political muscle necessary to pass early park legislation in Congress, in fact, was typically supplied not by artists or intellectuals, but by railroads and other private corporations, not known for their desire to preserve anything unless it somehow served their interests.⁴

But if historians have sometimes noted the irony of the fact that Congress acted mainly to serve corporate interests, not the greater good, when it created the early national parks, they have also been reluctant to fully explain why some of the most powerful capitalists of their day saw park making as an appropriate extension of their activities. Histories written since World War II treat the national park primarily within the context of the idea of “wilderness” in American culture. In his 1957 history, Hans Huth marshals examples of pastoral themes from three centuries of American literature, poetry, and landscape painting, tracing a progression from Colonial fear and ambivalence towards the wild continent, to picturesque tourism and landscape painting in the 1820s, to the reveries of Emerson and the activism of Olmsted in the 1850s. The history follows a steadily improving and maturing American attitude towards nature, culminating both in the expansion of the national park system after World War I, and the “wilderness movement” after World War II.⁵ Roderick Nash describes a similar intellectual progression in American thought and literature, from a congenital horror of uncultivated places, to “revolutionary” changes in attitude towards “uninhabited land,” as demonstrated above all in the writing of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold.⁶ Historians have apotheosized the national parks as “wilderness preserved” even while acknowledging that most parks established before World War II were not necessarily intended to preserve wilderness (at least not in the postwar sense of the word).

⁴ See Alfred Runte, “Pragmatic Alliance: Western Railroads and the National Parks,” *National Park and Conservation Association Magazine* 48 (April 1974): 14-21; Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 84-173; William C. Tweed and Lary M. Dilsaver, *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (Three Rivers, California: Sequoia Natural History Association, Inc., 1990), 69-73.

⁵ For Huth, “The ideas of Aldo Leopold, Robert Marshall, and their friends were novel in the 1920s...but they were a continuation of the line of thinking expressed in the works of Catlin, Emerson, and Thoreau.” Huth, *Nature and the American*, 204.

⁶ See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 44-83, 96-121. More recently, Max Oelschlaeger traces the “idea of wilderness” from a Palaeolithic Eden through the tumultuous and destructive activities of human civilization since the Renaissance. Oelschlaeger also sees Thoreau, Muir, and Leopold as the most influential prophets of the post-World War II (or “postmodern”) ideal of wilderness. Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

One influential postwar historian of national parks, Alfred Runte, explains the origins of national parks almost entirely in terms of “monumentalism” and “cultural nationalism.” Suffering from a sense of cultural inadequacy, Americans adopted the scenic wonders of their country (particularly in western states) as a compensating replacement for the ancient history and architecture of Europe. But again, Runte notes that if national parks were created to fulfil “cultural rather than environmental needs,” the idea “evolved” and “became important for wilderness preservation...and purposes closer to the concerns of ecologists.”⁷ The parks only began to assume their true and relevant significance, in other words, as manifestations of “wilderness” in the postwar era of nascent environmentalism.

These historians helped redefine the ideal of wilderness at a time when it was reaching a zenith of its influence in American society and politics. Congress passed the Wilderness Act in 1964, for example, and designated over 90 million acres of wilderness on federal lands in the next twenty-five years. And although the national forest system contained more legislated wilderness, for many Americans the national parks most effectively expressed this postwar ideal of an untrammelled and uninhabited landscape. But the specific new meaning of wilderness, as a place “retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements,” where “man himself is a visitor who does not remain”(as the 1964 Wilderness Act defined it), obviously contrasted with the conditions found in the frontcountry areas of most national parks.⁸ Yosemite Valley, for example, had not been a wilderness in this sense for over a century.

2.2 National Park Service History

National Park Service histories that treat the postwar period fall into several groups, but Roy Appleman’s history of the Mission 66 program is unique.⁹ Appleman was a Park Service historian working on Mission 66 planning who took extensive, sometimes verbatim notes of meetings and events in 1955 and 1956. Like many Park Service employees at the time, he felt that he was part of an effort that was making history. He interviewed Conrad Wirth in 1957 and his unpublished history was finished the next year. Appleman’s detailed account of the planning of Mission 66, along with

⁷ Runte, *National Parks*, xx-xxi, 1-5, 11-32.

⁸ For the wording of the Wilderness Act, see Lary M. Dilsaver, *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham Way, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1994), 277-286.

⁹ Roy E. Appleman, “A History of the National Park Service Mission 66 Program.” Unpublished report (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1958).

Wirth's memoirs published in 1980, are by far the most detailed accounts of the program and have been used extensively by historians.¹⁰ Wirth himself acknowledges consulting Appleman's report in writing his memoirs. A comparison of these two texts—checked against the primary sources (copious official memoranda and correspondence) has been an interesting study in points of view. Appleman and Wirth generally agree in content and tone. They do omit aspects of the story, however, that were controversial or that involved pragmatic compromises. Neither Wirth's decision not to discuss limiting public visitation as an option in most parks, for example, nor his decision to build a motel in the Everglades appear in these accounts. Nevertheless, these two histories remain essential sources.

The few government reports on the subject of Mission 66 in more recent years all rely heavily on Appleman and Wirth. This standard history is the story Wirth and the Park Service wanted to tell: the financially strapped agency, unable to cope with postwar demands on its facilities, suddenly achieved great success by planning a compelling ten-year development proposal that convinced Congress to reverse its postwar policies and fund parks generously. This story is largely true, as far as the facts. It is summarized most effectively by a government study of Mission 66 visitor centres by Sarah Allaback.¹¹ Although this report is the most important secondary source on Mission 66, the initial administrative history is brief; the bulk of the study gives comprehensive histories of individual buildings, three of which were made National Historic Landmarks based on her research and findings.

Most general surveys of national park history, such as Ise and Runte, treat Mission 66 in a perfunctory manner. This is also true of many administrative histories of individual parks, such as Anderson, Bartlett, and Martinson, which broadly characterize the Mission 66 era in a rather negative way, without attempting to look further.¹² Perhaps the most insightful general history of the Park Service, as far as Mission 66 goes, is Ronald Foresta, who provides a thoughtful analysis of the program in the context of the

¹⁰ Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980).

¹¹ Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000).

¹² John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961); Runte, *National Parks*, 1987; Michael F. Anderson, *Polishing the Jewel: An Administrative History of Grand Canyon National Park* (Grand Canyon, Arizona: Grand Canyon Association, 2000); Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985); Arthur David Martinson, "Mountain in the Sky: A History of Mount Rainier National Park," Washington State University, 1966.

changing politics and structure of the federal government. This survey history of the agency, however, does not attempt to provide a detailed treatment of Mission 66.¹³

Much of the scholarship on the history of park planning and design has been concerned with prewar design and development, which has been championed since the 1980s as a golden period of American park making. Many historians came to see Mission 66 design—which is above all modernist not rustic—as a time when the agency lost its way, and deviated from more desirable, traditional policy. This is even true of survey histories of national park design such as Carr, Harrison, and McClelland.¹⁴ These all treat Mission 66 essentially as a coda, or conclusion, of the story of Park Service design, without examining the period in depth.

There are numerous Park Service general reference sources that are invaluable for many reasons. Long time chief historian Ronald Lee (also an important Mission 66 planner) wrote several studies of the Park Service, as did one of his successors, Barry Mackintosh.¹⁵ Olsen and Tolson compiled organizational and legislative data that is very useful.¹⁶ Only one true critical assessment of Mission 66 planning and design has been undertaken, by Zube, et al.¹⁷ Although these landscape architects provide an interesting study of visitor centre design, they made no attempt to analyze the history or broader policies of Mission 66.

¹³ Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, Inc., 1984).

¹⁴ Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Laura Soulliere Harrison, *Architecture in the Parks: National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986); Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Ronald F. Lee, *Family Tree of the National Park System* (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1972); idem, *The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973); idem, *Public Use of the National Park System: 1872-2000* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1968); Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986); idem, *National Park Service Administrative History* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991); idem, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991).

¹⁶ Russ Olsen, *Administrative History: Organizational Structures of the National Park Service 1917-1985* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985); Hillory A. Tolson, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials* [1964], revised as 75th Anniversary Edition by Harold P. Danz (Denver: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991).

¹⁷ Ervin H. Zube, Joseph H. Crystal, and James F. Palmer, *Visitor Center Design Evaluation* (Denver: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976).

2.3 Academic Studies and Administrative Histories

Appleman and Wirth are also the main sources for the administrative histories given in academic theses by Jofuku, Madrid, Monroe, and Zenzen.¹⁸ Some of these academic works have interesting insights; but essentially they rely on the sources described above, as well as some research on individual case studies.

Many administrative histories of individual parks have chapters on Mission 66 as it relates to their subjects. Most do not make significant contributions to the Mission 66 literature, but several do. Barringer's work on Yellowstone, in particular, sheds light on the complex relationships between parks and concessioners during this period.¹⁹ Bellavia, Belshaw, Bishop, Brown, Catton, Greiff, Pritchard, and Stakley all provide histories of individual parks that were developed during the Mission 66 period.²⁰ Their administrative histories therefore reveal some information about the program as it was applied in specific cases, and they are among the most useful secondary sources available.

Published literature on Mission 66 is only beginning to appear, but judging by the academic work, more is clearly on the way. Some of this published work, especially Barringer and Catton gives new interpretation and assessment of Mission 66, based on new archival research. Most other general histories, academic theses, and park administrative histories, however, repeat a now familiar story, based ultimately on Appleman and Wirth.

¹⁸ Tracey Lynne Jofuku, "That the Past Shall Live: Conrad Wirth and the National Park Service, 1951-1963," Bachelor of Arts Honors History Thesis, Harvard University, 1991; Christine L. Madrid, "The Mission 66 Visitor Centers: Early Modern Architecture in the National Park Service, 1956-1976," Master of Architectural History Thesis, University of Virginia, 1998; Jonathan Searle Monroe, "Architecture in the National Parks: Cecil Doty and Mission 66," Master of Architecture Thesis, University of Washington, 1986; Joanne Michele Zenzen, "Promoting National Parks: Images of the West in the American Imagination," University of Maryland, College Park, 1997.

¹⁹ Mark Barringer, "Mission Impossible: National Park Development in the 1950s," *JOW* 38, no. 1 (January 1999): 22-26; idem, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

²⁰ Regina M. Bellavia, *Cultural Landscape Report for Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri* (Omaha: Government Printing Office, 1996); Mike Belshaw and Ed Peplow, Jr., *Historic Resource Study: Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Nevada* (Denver: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d.); M. Guy Bishop, "Mission 66 in the National Parks of Southern California and the Southwest," *Southern California Quarterly* 80 (Fall 1998): 293-314; Sharon A. Brown, *Administrative History: Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Historic Site* (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984); Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Seattle: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996); Constance M. Greiff, *Independence: The Creation of a National Park* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); James A. Pritchard, *Preserving Yellowstone's Natural Conditions: Science and the Perception of Nature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); J. Tracey Stakely, *Salt Pond Visitor Center Cultural Landscape Report* (Boston: National Park Service, Northeast Region, 1999).

2.4 Landscape Architecture and Perceptions of Modernism

The 1950s and 1960s was a rich period in American landscape architecture, but one that made many breaks with prewar theory and practice. Landscape architects had long been a strong influence in national park planning and design. This influence continued under Mission 66, and in fact Wirth, Vint, and other key individuals were professional landscape architects. The relationship between the profession and the Park Service, however, changed during the postwar period. While the New Deal had seen enormous (almost total) participation among landscape architects, by 1945 most leading professionals were establishing private practices again. New kinds of clients led to new kinds of commissions, from suburban backyards, to massive tract subdivisions, to corporate parks and shopping centres. The “country place” era was over, as was the park making apogee of the New Deal. America was booming, however, and an altered private practice of landscape architecture once again became the most desirable form of practice, especially among leading designers. For the rest of the twentieth century, landscape architecture would not have the close association with park making and management that it had enjoyed in the United States since 1858.

The term “modern landscape architecture” typically appears in the secondary literature in reference to private (or semi-public), modernist-inspired landscape design done from the 1920s and the 1970s in Europe and the United States. Christopher Tunnard helped establish modernist theory as a basis for new landscape design in the postwar period.²¹ He reiterated contemporary architectural theory, particularly as expressed by Hitchcock, Gideon, or Pevsner, for example.²² The practice of landscape architecture that emerged during the postwar period abandoned Olmstedian landscape theory in favour of modernist architectural theory, and saw landscape architecture (as Hitchcock described it) as a “sort of outdoor architecture” that extended modernist principles and appearances

²¹ Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1938); idem, “Modern Gardens for Modern Houses: Reflections on Current Trends in Landscape Design,” *Landscape Architecture* (January 1942): 57-64.

²² Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., and Phillip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* [1932] (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966); Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* [1958] (New York: Penguin Books, 1977); Sigfried Giedeon, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* [1941] Fifth Edition, Revised and Enlarged (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* [1936] Revised and partly rewritten edition (New York: Peregrine Books, 1986); idem, *An Outline of European Architecture* [1943] (London: Penguin Books, 1988).

into the design of gardens and other landscapes. The implications for the relationship of landscape architecture to park design were profound, since park planning and design to that point (including national parks) had been guided in the United States by essentially Olmstedian theory.

A number of landscape architects active in national park work attempted to explain their situation in the 1940s, although without much success. Carnes and Hubbard, for example, rely on familiar platitudes to describe the work of landscape architects in planning national parks.²³ The momentum of the profession was simply elsewhere at the time. More recent histories of significant work of the period make no mention of national parks, and in fact park work in general was no longer a leading component of professional practice. Rogers, Simo, Tishler, and Treib, for example, do not mention park work as a significant factor in the postwar profession of landscape architecture in the United States.²⁴ The monographs that exist on postwar landscape architecture, such as Birnbaum, Hildebrand, and Streatfield, all treat other aspects of postwar practice, especially garden and corporate park design.²⁵

The literature on postwar landscape architecture does not reference the earlier work of American landscape architects as much as it refers to histories of architectural modernism, including Benevolo, Collins, Frampton, Jacobus, Jordy, and Kaufmann.²⁶ The history of postwar design, generally, in the United States, has been treated as a history of modernist design, emphasizing the role of architects.

²³ William G. Carnes, "Landscape Architecture in the National Park Service," *Landscape Architecture* 41, no. 4 (July 1951): 145-50; Henry V. Hubbard, "The Designer in National Parks: The Preservation and Enhancement of Natural Scenery," *Landscape Architecture* 38, no. 2 (January 1948): 58-60; idem, "Landscape Development Based in Conservation As Practiced in the National Park Service," *Landscape Architecture* 29, no. 3 (April 1939): 105-21.

²⁴ Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001); Melanie Simo, *100 Years of Landscape Architecture: Some Patterns of a Century* (Washington, DC: ASLA Press, 1999); idem, *The Coalescing of Different Forces and Ideas: A History of Landscape Architecture at Harvard, 1900-1999* (Cambridge: Harvard University graduate School of Design, 2000); William H. Tishler, ed., *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places* (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1989); Marc Treib, ed., *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993).

²⁵ Charles A. Birnbaum, ed., *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture: Papers From the Wave Hill--National Park Service Conference* (Cambridge: Spacemaker Press, 1999); Gary R. Hildebrand, *The Miller Garden: Icon of Modernism* (Washington, DC: Spacemaker Press, 1999); David C. Streatfield, *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994).

²⁶ Leonardo Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture* [1960] 2 vols. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1977); Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1965); Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. Revised and Enlarged Edition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985); John Jacobus, *Twentieth-Century Architecture: The Middle Years, 1940-1965* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); William H. Jordy, *The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. American Buildings and Their Architects, Volume 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., ed., *The Rise of an American Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

For Mission 66, the modernist inspiration of the new park architecture has always determined much of the response to the entire program. The condemnation of modernism became a condemnation of Mission 66 in general, especially among early environmentalists. Advocates such as Butcher and Shephard decried the trend to modernist design already by the early 1950s, and the pages of *Living Wilderness* and the *Sierra Club Bulletin* were filled with similar denunciations by mid-decade.²⁷ Articles in professional architecture journals, on the other hand, took the opposite stand. *Architectural Forum* showcased work by Park Service consultants, and articles such as one by Koehler continued in this vein.²⁸ The Park Service had become a laudable client, as far as many contemporary architects were concerned, willing to employ innovative design and patronizing the rising stars of their field.

2.5 Postwar Geography

The large scale, geographic changes in the North American landscape that occurred during this period enormously influenced the situation of the national park system. The Interstate Highway system alone may be the most profoundly altering landscape project ever undertaken; yet it has received relatively little attention from landscape historians and theorists. Postwar “suburbanization,” on the other hand, has a vast literature. Corporate parks and shopping centres have also begun to receive serious scholarly consideration.

Histories of the Interstate Highway system are limited to Lewis, Rose, and Seely.²⁹ While Lewis’s history is more idiosyncratic (and the basis of a television documentary), Seely’s is a semi-official account of the activities of the Bureau of Public Roads (an agency with interesting ties to the contemporary Park Service). Rose’s account combines a comprehensive history with a more thorough and critical examination of the political and social forces at work in the 1950s. The story of federal-aid highway

²⁷ Devereux Butcher, “For a Return to Harmony in Park Architecture,” *National Parks Magazine* 26, no. 111 (October 1952): 150-157; Paul A. Shephard, Jr., “Something Amiss in the National Parks,” *National Parks Magazine* 27, no. 115 (October 1953-December 1953): 150-151, 187-90.

²⁸ Architectural Forum, eds., *Building U.S.A.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955); idem, *Building, USA: The Men and Methods That Influence Architecture in America Today* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957); Robert E. Koehler, “Our Park Service Serves Architecture Well,” *AIA Journal* 1 (January 1971).

²⁹ Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997); Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1939-1989* (Revised edition. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers As Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

construction, however, remains relatively unexamined, considering the scope and impact of its results.

Postwar "suburbanization," on the other hand, has been written about extensively, often by those critical of postwar trends. This tradition began in a literary vein with Keats, Whyte, and Wilson, and was continued with more sociological rigor by Donaldson and Gans.³⁰ By the 1960s the "suburb" became a favourite subject of academic planners. Tunnard and Pushkarev made some of the earliest and most perceptive observations on the patterns of postwar urbanization.³¹ Fishman, Hayden, Jackson, Machor, Relph, Weiss, and Stern all contributed to a remarkable surge of scholarship on the origins of the American suburb and its apparently mad culmination in the postwar decades.³² Much of the interest among scholars in the 1980s resulted from convictions that "sprawling" urbanization was destroying many of the last remaining rural and scenic areas in the extended metropolitan regions around cities. The academic literature supported the rise of New Urbanism, a movement based largely on prewar and Garden City planning concepts. This was also a decade in which private land trusts proliferated, a trend that acknowledged the limited and unsuccessful roles government had been able to play in preserving rural and scenic landscapes in the "exurban" fringes of many metropolitan areas.

Some more recent literature on "suburbanization" has taken a more nuanced, less pejorative tone. This has been particularly true in the study of shopping centres and other "new building types." L. Cohen, N. Cohen, and Longstreth have established new understandings of the origins and significance of shopping centres and the cultural

³⁰ Scott Donaldson, *The Suburban Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969; Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* [1967] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1956); William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955).

³¹ Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control? An Inquiry into Selected Problems of Design in the Urbanized Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

³² Robert L. Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987); idem, "American Suburbs/English Suburbs," *Journal of Urban History* 13, no. 3 (May 1987): 237-51; Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: Norton, 1986); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); James Machor, *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Robert A. M. Stern and John Montague Massengale, "The Anglo American Suburb," *Architectural Design* 51, no. 10/11 (1981); Marc A. Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

significance of the consumerism and mass production of the era.³³ The technology and economics of housing production have also been subjects of important recent work. Albrecht, Baldwin, Goodwin, and Hartman have all looked at the effects of World War II and U.S. Army postwar domestic housing programs on the housing industry of the 1950s.³⁴ "Corporate parks" have also received laudatory attention as important examples of modernist planning and design and have also become the subject of more critical scholarship, such as Mozingo.³⁵

In considering national park development the context of contemporary road, shopping centre, and subdivision design—all of which directly and indirectly affected Mission 66 planning ideas and architectural design—needed to be considered at length.

2.6 Environmentalism

In addition to work on Mission 66 itself there are histories of private non-profits and the environmental movement that provide vital points of view. Cohen and Miles have written histories of the Sierra Club and National Parks Association, respectively.³⁶ These organizations criticized Mission 66 harshly, and these official histories adopt the same tone and repeat many of the same arguments against "overdevelopment" and the loss of "wilderness values."

Most broader histories of postwar environmentalism make either no mention, or virtually no mention, of Mission 66. This is true of Hays and Rothman.³⁷ No history of

³³ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); idem, "From Town Centre to Shopping Centre: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1050-1081; Nancy E. Cohen, *America's Marketplace: The History of Shopping Centres* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc., 2002); Richard Longstreth, *City Centre to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997); idem, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999).

³⁴ Donald Albrecht, ed., *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995); William C. Baldwin, "Wherry and Capehart: Army Family Housing Privatization Programs in the 1950s," *Engineer* (April 1996): 42-44; R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., *Neighbourhood Design Guidelines for Army Wherry and Capehart Era Family Housing*. Draft, government report: 2002; Chester Hartman and Robin Drayer, "Military-Family Housing: The Other Public Housing Program," *Housing and Society* 17, no. 3 (1990): 67-78.

³⁵ Louise A. Mozingo, "The Corporate Estate in the USA, 1954-64: 'Thoroughly Modern in Concept, But...Down to Earth and Rugged,'" *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 20, no. 1 (January 2000): 25-56.

³⁶ Michael P. Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988); John C. Miles, *Guardians of the Parks: A History of the National Parks and Conservation Association* (Washington, DC: National Parks and Conservation Association, 1995).

³⁷ Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Hal Rothman, *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (New York, Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 2001).

the environmental movement examines Mission 66 in any detail; what references there are invariably are passing dismissals and denunciations.

The historical role of environmental science in the management of national parks has been analyzed in detail by Sellars.³⁸ This 1997 history—the most important general history of American national parks to appear in decades—argues persuasively that Mission 66 failed to create what could have been a historic opportunity to establish a greater role for science and environmentalist priorities in the Park Service. Even here, however, Mission 66 is treated with a broad brush. The policies and intentions of the program are dismissed easily because they are never examined closely.

³⁸ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Sources of Data

The sources of data that potentially could be used to address initial research questions based on the gaps in knowledge outlined above are very extensive. The National Archives in College Park Maryland, alone, contains an entire record group (RG 79) for the National Park Service. Conrad Wirth's official agency papers became available about half way through my project, making this the first study to use these records.

Individual parks are usually the best source for archival records relating to their history and development, particularly of the recent past. The Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, conserves a unique collection of Mission 66 era records in its National Park History Collection. The Harpers Ferry Center also conserves the central agency photograph archive, with millions of images taken between the 1920s and the present. Conrad Wirth's personal papers were donated by his family to the University of Wyoming, Laramie. This collection contains his non-official records, mostly from his retirement years. This study has been the first of its type to make extensive use of these records, as well.

These archives together represented a rich and thorough documentation of the planning, design, and construction associated with Mission 66. Some collections were well organized with finding aids that made it possible to quickly target a specific period, person, or project. Most, however, were not. The National Archives, for example, had only begun to process their postwar documents in this record group. For the rustic (prewar) era, extensive help was available to navigate efficiently through thousands of boxes of (especially Washington Office) records of the Park Service. Conrad Wirth's official papers, which became available in 2003, had no finding aids at all. I had no choice except to go through them all, box by box. Individual park archives varied widely regarding their state of conservation. Yellowstone and Yosemite had exceptional research libraries and archives with vital and unique information regarding Mission 66 in these parks. Other parks had records stored under far less organized circumstances.

Oral history was also an important data source since many of the participants in Mission 66 were alive and willing to be interviewed. The oral history project for this

thesis included over two dozen interviews with agency staff, family members of agency staff (including descendants of Thomas Vint and Conrad Wirth), former National Park Service director George Hartzog, and many others. Conrad Wirth, Thomas Vint, and other key figures of this story had died before research began. Several important transcribed oral history interviews were available, however, at Berkeley's Bancroft Library and at the National Park History Collection at Harpers Ferry.

Government documents and databases—particularly as they have become available in digital form—are a rich source of data and quantitative methodologies and analysis. More personal sources, such as letters and diaries of park visitors, have been elusive, but official correspondence abounds and published memoirs of officials are also plentiful. Visual sources, including scripted Park Service audio-visual presentations, numerous pamphlets, and other public relations efforts, have been essential sources of data. Oral histories—both done for this project and older transcribed projects—have also been valuable. Again these sources mainly involved Park Service and other government officials, however, not the general public.

Site visits, made possible by the Park Service sponsorship of this research, would themselves prove to be a vital source of information. The landscapes and buildings being researched often had no secondary literature describing them. Observations in the field, therefore, were an essential means of gaining basic data about the extent, functionality, and appearance of many Mission 66 developments. These field trips were recorded through thousands of digital photographs (a few of which illustrate this thesis), as well as notes. Research in park archives often provided whatever primary documentation, both graphic and textual, proved available for buildings and designed landscapes.

Secondary literature, as discussed in the following literature review, would prove to be of limited use in establishing a comprehensive historical context for Mission 66. The secondary literature tends to be either memoir or polemic, not history or analysis. Similarly park managers and staff, today, often proved less reliable and informed as sources of objective information than they would be, typically, for prewar, rustic developments. Bias and rumour about Mission 66 are very evident today among Park Service officials and others and needed to be understood as such, at times.

3.2 Narrative Theory

This thesis has taken the form of a narrative dissertation on the subject of postwar national park planning and design in the United States. The project began, however, by

questioning this approach altogether and by investigating the theory of historical research generally and narrative construction specifically. This initial theoretical investigation was pursued concurrently with the development of research questions, the investigation of potential sources of data, and the consideration of appropriate research methodologies. All of these activities mutually influenced the result of the first phase of the thesis project. The experience of reading and discussing a wide range of historiographical theory and methods led to a more diverse consideration of research questions, historical themes, and proposed methodologies. Because the nature of the thesis research seemed to indicate that a historical narrative would be desirable or even necessary, the subject of general historical theory was important from the outset.

The debate over the role of narrative in the writing of history developed during the 1960s and 70s, when scholars such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault began to explore both the structure of historical narrative and the role of the writer as historian. Since then, the study of narrative has developed into a field unto itself, primarily in departments of literature. The topic under debate is essentially the extent to which historical writings are determined by the narrative, or story-telling form. To what extent does the self-conscious act of writing influence and inform historical “facts” and the way in which those facts are arranged to make a story? If the narrative form is impossible to escape, how can we achieve a more scientific, analytical, and therefore “truer” history?

Although much of narrative theory focuses on semiotics, linguistics and other topics beyond the scope of this project, the groundbreaking work of scholars in such fields has been important to the development of research questions shaping this thesis. Scholars of the 1980s and 1990s were educated with this awareness of themselves as historians having the capacity, and responsibility, to write different versions of history. Raymond Martin describes this new self-consciousness in his book, *The Past Within Us*, noting that the “overriding explanatory objective of historians is to show that their explanations are better than competing explanations, and they attempt to do this by arguing both for their explanations and against competing explanations.”³⁹ The development of research questions has involved sorting through competing explanations, often offered by competing primary sources, and by making judgements which support the most valid conclusions. The narrative itself constructs and supports the notion of validity, and so becomes one more polemical discourse, assuming its own role and

position, in this case, in the continuing public discourse on the meanings and significance of American national park history.

A survey of the literature on narrative, as introduced by literary theorists and philosophers, has helped me to better understand the perspectives of the historians who chronicled the early years of Mission 66, as well as the vantage point of contemporary critics. From a perspective informed by this critical discourse, I am better able to see the limitations of the first historians of Mission 66, Appleman and Wirth, who wrote what they and their peers would describe unquestionably as history. It is worth noting here that the writing of Park Service history by Park Service employees, and the writing of public history in general, has been, to a great extent, sheltered from debates in literary theory and philosophy. The lack of critical theory has in some ways simplified my task: the texts of writers such as Appleman and Wirth offer a clear view of what was accepted as true and important in their day. Over the last decade, historians with less obvious agendas have offered more challenging historical narratives. Insight into this more acute awareness of writing history is offered by literary critic Hayden White in his famous book, *Tropics of Discourse*. According to White, “those historians who draw a firm line between history and philosophy of history fail to recognize that every historical discourse contains within it a full-blown, if only implicit, philosophy of history.”⁴⁰ By reading and comparing work by White and other literary theorists, I have developed a more refined sense of my own philosophy of history and become better able to identify that of the writers consulted throughout my thesis. White’s work has been particularly useful in framing reference questions that address my topic from different perspectives and force me to consciously recognise—and ultimately both work within and minimise—my own biases.

Although “narratology” is considered a branch of literary criticism, the role of narrative in the writing of history is a subject that historians such as Michael Kammen acknowledge as central to their profession. Kammen discusses the role of the “histoire problème” in recent historical scholarship, and asks of a prospective research project: “How well is it problematized?”⁴¹ What is the historical problem addressed, or is the historian simply telling a story (constructing a narrative)? There are a number of ways to

³⁹ Raymond Martin, *The Past Within Us: An Empirical Approach to Philosophy of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 31.

⁴⁰ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 126-7.

⁴¹ Michael Kammen, “An Americanist’s Reprise: The Pervasive Role of Histoire Problème in Historical Scholarship Concerning the United States Since the 1960s,” *Reviews in American History* 26 (March 1998): 1-25.

“problematize” the subject of postwar national park development in the United States through the formation of research questions and hypotheses. For example: How and why did the same group of Park Service professionals produce “rustic” development before the war and “modern” (“Mission 66”) development—at least apparently so very different in its inspiration—afterwards? One could hypothesize, in fact, that the differences between rustic and modern were relatively superficial, and that the underlying theory and ideology of park making had remained constant.

Another approach might be to ask why was much public reaction to postwar park development—much of which was widely perceived to be necessary and needed—so negative? One could hypothesize that the reaction to modernism generally (outside park boundaries) affected the aesthetic critic of Mission 66. Or again, why were proto-environmentalists particularly negative, when in many ways Mission 66 represented a more “scientific” approach to park management? One could hypothesize that in fact environmentalism involves an emotional or aesthetic response, not a scientific impulse, which would explain its embrace of rustic over modernist design. What do public and official reactions to Mission 66 tell us about attitudes towards Modernism and modernization in general during the period? One could hypothesize that that for government officials (as well as other powerful clients of the era) modernism represented the centralized, technocratic efficiency and power to which they aspired. Problematizing the historical narrative of Mission 66 development in these ways involved addressing issues of perception and opinions of postwar Modernism in the United States. Because of the unique symbolic position of national parks, reactions to Mission 66 provide a telling instance of postwar attitudes towards the rapid and dramatic changes taking place in the American landscape.

While Kammen emphasizes the (mostly French and American) point of view that “history is not story telling but problem solving,” environmental historian William Cronon reminds us that humans are “the story-telling animal” and that all history is narrative. Narrative, for Cronon, is simply the way humans think (and write). The point is to make sure we write “good” narratives, that make people care about the subject, and that include a full consideration of many points of view as well as enough self-examination to understand our own.⁴²

⁴² William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* 18 (March 1992): 1347-76.

Because of the structure of this thesis, the project provided an excellent opportunity to examine the historical narrative form itself, and to expand on it in significant ways. The result is still a narrative, of course, which Cronon points out is almost completely unavoidable for anyone writing a historical text. The goal becomes the creation of an “expanded narrative,” however, one that explores more diverse points of view, data, and methodologies.

3.3 Other Approaches to Writing History

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz uses the notion of “thick description” in his ethnographic observations and methodology.⁴³ American historians have used this idea to theorize their own activities, particularly since the 1970s (contemporary to the interest in semiotic analysis of texts in history and other disciplines). For Geertz every observation or description of an event bears endless examination and reveals multiple dimensions of meaning, referencing the observer as much as the observed. For historians, the message was: “there could be no...disembodied histories of ideas. Instead, there are discourses to be understood.” “Culture,” given the anthropological definition of “patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems,” becomes the proper subject of the historian. Ethnographic methods become another tool for the historian to uncover the cultural significance of the built environment and social activities.

“Micro-history,” and the entire issue of using the relatively commonplace object or biography to extrapolate larger observations and significance, has had particular significance to this thesis project. Mission 66 itself—hardly a well known movement even among architectural historians—can be considered a microcosm in which contemporary ideals of modernization and progress were expressed. The relation of “micro” to “macro” is one that shaped research questions.

David Thelen’s discussion of “transnational history” also helped frame research questions. History has indeed been the “stepchild of nationalism” in the modern era, and this is particularly true of American national park history. Historians have typically described the “American national park idea” as a foundation of national identity, without recognizing that the landscape park is a transnational idea: its theoretical sources and

⁴³ Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description,” “Deep Play,” in *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30; 412-53.

design origins crossed national boundaries extensively. Park history, in fact, makes an excellent subject for transnational history.⁴⁴

Various other historiographical approaches, methods, and sources of data have been considered as part of this thesis project. Questions generated by inquiries into the material culture of the postwar period, for example, were useful. The postwar period was famous for the rise of consumerism, and perhaps excessive materialism in American life. The material culture of the 1950s shaped planning and design ideas, as well as public expectations of parks, accommodations, and levels of convenience.

3.4 Issues Regarding Research of the Recent Past

Many historic preservationists in the United States and elsewhere have become increasingly concerned that properties dating to the recent past—less than fifty years old—are not adequately protected through existing preservation laws and policies.⁴⁵ The National Register of Historic Places in the United States, for example, requires that a property less than fifty years old possess “exceptional significance” in order to be considered eligible for listing.⁴⁶ Advocates for the preservation of Mission 66 architecture in the national parks (and of mid-century modernism in general) have argued that the “fifty-year rule” should be abandoned and that all potential resources should be assessed in terms of historical significance regardless of age. But any assessment of the significance of the postwar built environment inevitably begins with concern that the potential resources involved are not old enough to be historical. The paucity of secondary literature on the recent past—certainly the case with Mission 66—reinforces this concern.

The recent past also demands research methods tailored to suit the type of data available and issues that arise in the treatment of that data. Archival sources, for example, tend to be less organized or processed for the recent past. While these difficulties can and must be overcome, there is no doubt that at least in some cases the use of archival data can be seriously compromised by the lack of finding aids. Archivists themselves are often less familiar with the records pertaining to the recent past, again potentially limiting the effective exploitation of records. Archival records for federal

⁴⁴ Matti Peltonen, “Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research,” *History and Theory* 40 (October 2001): 347-59; David Thelen, “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History,” *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999): 965-75.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Charles A. Birnbaum, ed., *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture: Papers From the Wave Hill--National Park Service Conference* (Cambridge: Spacemaker Press, 1999).

agencies in the United States also tend to be more dispersed. The National Archives was regionalized in the 1970s, before records of the 1950s began to be accessioned and processed. The central archives building (in College Park, Maryland) therefore only contains the records of the Washington offices of federal agencies. The records of regional offices and individual parks often went (or have yet to go) to the regional offices of the National Archives all over the country.

But if archival research of the recent past is potentially more complicated and less fruitful, other avenues of inquiry into the recent past have unique potential. Oral histories and interviews obviously are sources of data not available to historians of the more distant past. Throughout this thesis project, personal relationships have been developed with surviving Mission 66 personnel or their descendants. Mainly through telephone conversations, these relationships have provided a vital cross reference on facts and the interpretation of facts. Above all personal contacts have helped establish some of the atmosphere and feelings of the times.

The oral history project for this thesis was conducted mainly in 2003 with the help of a graduate assistant funded through the University of Massachusetts. Interviews were recorded with over two dozen individuals interviewed over the telephone. Protocols established by the American Society of Landscape Architects for oral history projects were employed.⁴⁷ The selection of interviewees was limited to those with direct experience of Mission 66 planning, design, and construction, and to surviving close relatives of people with such experience.

The use of oral history also demands familiarity with the burgeoning literature on the science of memory and its influence on historians (particularly in the United States) today.⁴⁸ Even more importantly, however, the use of personal accounts by individuals directly involved in events requires corroboration by textual sources, whenever possible. While participants in history may have unique insight and information, the malleable and creative nature of memory and fact that individuals also may have a point of view demand that interviews be used in close correlation with other, textual sources, as events were pieced together. At times, the struggle of certain individuals (whether in interviews

⁴⁶ National Register of Historic Places, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Bulletin 15 (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2002).

⁴⁷ Noel Dorsey Vernon, C. Elizabeth Garvey, and Sherda K. Williams, "Oral History Guidelines for Landscape Historians," ASLA Open Committee on Historic Preservation, 1990.

or through published memoirs) itself became a source of information and inquiry, as different motivations revealed new dimensions of original disagreements and controversy.

3.5 Site Visits

Extensive field trips and photo documentation were an essential part of the research methodology for this thesis. Site visits were made possible through funding by the National Park Service, made through a grant to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Site visits combined archival research (in park archives) with field observations and interviews with park staff and any other local informants.

Site visits played a crucial role since so little secondary literature or analysis was available on Mission 66. To find out what was built under Mission 66 in a given park, there was often no way to be certain other than by looking. Park plans (prospectuses) were easily uncovered in archives; but there were often few records for how much of a given plan was actually implemented. Similarly there was no way to begin formal analysis of architectural and landscape design without visiting the sites and observing them. Textual and visual records did not record “as-built” conditions. Similarly there were few objective assessments of appearance or functionality of designs, or of alterations to them over the last fifty years.

Site visits were also essential to the collection of data. Many parks conserve—under widely variable conditions—the textual and graphic records of local Mission 66 development. This was particularly the case for construction progress photographs and reports, as well as superintendent’s reports, often the most vital source for piecing together events of the era.

During four years of research, over forty parks were visited, some repeatedly, for the purpose of seeing and assessing Mission 66 era development. Parks were located in every region of the United States and represented a full range of types, from small historic parks to large natural parks. Specific parks important to the story of Mission 66, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Everglades, and Cape Cod, for example, were visited three or more times, as ongoing research demanded. On occasion visits were made at the request of park staff in order to make presentations on the progress of research and on the role of Mission 66 in a given park.

⁴⁸ See, for example, David Thelen, “Memory and American History.” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 (March 1989): 1117-29; David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory.” *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 7-23.

3.6 Research Methods

The research methods devised for thesis research combined the theoretical inquiry of the literature and the practical considerations of data collection and site visits. The essence of the methodological approach was to construct a chronological narrative of Mission 66 that would address and hopefully provide answers for the research questions.

The development of research questions was an ongoing process throughout the thesis project, but occurred mostly during the initial stages of methodological research and identification of sources of data. The following description of the research questions approved for this research during the first year of the project includes some additional explanation for how the questions were subsequently addressed in the historical narrative written over the following three years.

Chapter 4: Research Questions

4.1 Origins of Mission 66 Controversy

The “dilemma” of the national parks in the 1940s and the controversies created by Mission 66 construction in the 1950s and 1960s were of enormous consequence in the formation of the modern environmental movement and in shaping the legislation and policies that determined park management to the present day. What were the origins of the controversies around Mission 66? Did they begin with the program itself, or are their roots deeper?

This research question was intended lead to explorations of theoretical and historical backgrounds for controversies that occurred around the Mission 66 program. It was put forward under the hypothesis that reactions to the Mission 66 program indicated attitudes that had developed for decades—and even centuries—because at their core they were responses not just to Mission 66, but to the larger project of the modernization of the North American continent. The roots of these attitudes then should be traceable to the mid-eighteenth century, not just the mid-twentieth. In the narrative, these research questions led to an explication of early park making in Britain as well as the United States. Connections were established that linked mid-twentieth century responses to park making and landscape modernization to at least some attitudes evident in the 1790s.

4.2 Contemporary Influences on Conrad Wirth and Mission 66 Policy

What were the relationships between Mission 66 and contemporary trends in American society and landscape, including the rise of environmentalism and the construction of the Interstate Highway system? What individuals, ideas, or trends influenced Conrad Wirth in the formulation of his practice of “recreational planning” and therefore in the establishment of Mission 66 policy?

This research question was intended to lead to the elaboration of contemporary social and geographic contexts for the Mission 66 program. It was put forward under the hypothesis that links would be evident between Mission 66 policy and projects with the events and demographic trends of postwar America. In the narrative, this question led to a brief professional biography of Wirth, concentrating on his planning theory and practice. It also led to a summary of trends affecting the mid-twentieth century American

landscape, suggesting that Mission 66 planning ideas in part flowed out of the experience and influence of contemporary highway, commercial, and residential development in the United States.

4.3 Perceptions of Mission 66 and Attitudes Towards Modernism

What can attitudes and perceptions of Mission 66 tell us about broader postwar attitudes towards landscape modernization in the United States, generally? What did visitors think of Mission 66 and how did it correspond to what officials, planners, and professional critics were thinking? Why was modernist design already accepted at the Park Service before Mission 66 even began?

This research question broadened into an inquiry of how the postwar “dilemma” in American national parks was perceived and represented, and subsequently how Park Service planning and design efforts were perceived and represented. Professional organizations (such as the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects) had their own responses, while private advocacy groups, such as the Sierra Club, had another group of responses. Individual members of the public and government officials also contributed to the perceptions and representations of the problem, and the proposed solutions, as Mission 66 was planned. In all cases, attitudes shifted as the program moved from planning, to design, to construction. The question was presented under the hypothesis that examining attitudes towards modernist design generally in the 1950s would provide insights on public reactions to the Mission 66 program.

4.4 The Significance of the Mission 66 Prospectus

What was the significance of the Mission 66 revision of national park master planning policy? Postwar park development looked different (modernist), but did it function differently and was it supported by new theory? What was essentially new, and what continued prewar policy, in the Mission 66 prospectus?

This research question was put forward under the hypothesis that the modernist architecture in national parks in the 1950s both embodied and enabled a profound shift in basic park master planning theory and principles. The result of new architectural imagery combined with a new planning framework (represented by the Mission 66 prospectus) is characterized in this thesis as the Mission 66 modernist park.

These research questions required a detailed administrative history of the planning of Mission 66 in 1955 and 1956 to begin to appreciate why, ultimately, postwar national park development looks modernist rather than rustic, and the degree to which this change represented a profound shift in park planning priorities and theory. The individual case studies also support the conclusions reached in response to these questions.

4.5 Mission 66 Design and Contemporary Context

What were contemporary developments in the professions of architecture and landscape architecture? What are the relationships of Mission 66 to contemporary professional (planning and design) history, and how does that history help explain changes in Park Service policy and design?

The thesis explores the relationship of Park Service planning and design to contemporary work in American architecture and landscape architecture generally. The questions are put forward under the hypothesis that contemporary architecture influenced Mission 66, although exactly how and why was not clear. The relationship to contemporary landscape architecture also needed to be considered. Conrad Wirth and many of the most important Mission 66 officials were professional landscape architects. While during the prewar years there had been important connections to leading professionals in private practice and to the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), it was hypothesized that this relationship changed in the postwar period, with neither leading private practitioners nor the ASLA participating or advising in Mission 66.

4.6 Changing Perceptions of Nature and History

How did Mission 66 affect the way the visiting public perceived and appreciated the nature and history it sought to enjoy? To what degree were these changing perceptions related to the rise of the nascent environmental movement in the United States?

These research questions were perhaps the most important considering that a central goal of the thesis has been to come to an objective and informed assessment of Mission 66 in mid-twentieth century American culture. It was hypothesized that Mission 66, through a massive redevelopment of the national park system, significantly affected and changed the perception of nature and national history for many millions of park

visitors. How this was done, and the significance of how it was done, are questions that underlie every chapter of the thesis.

4.7 Continued Significance of Mission 66

What is the significance of Mission 66 today? To what degree is the national park system, the Park Service, and the public's experience of national parks a product of Mission 66 planning and design? These research questions required that the entire history of Mission 66—its demise and end as well as its planning and beginning—be presented in the thesis. The controversies that Mission 66 caused led to Wirth stepping down as Park Service director and in many changes of policy and new legislation in the 1960s. Was Mission 66 completed as intended, and what programs and initiatives followed it? Has another program of redevelopment followed, or do visitors today essentially visit a park system created through Mission 66? These questions were put forward under the hypothesis that Mission 66 significantly reinvented the experience of national parks, and that many aspects of that reinvention continue to shape the experiences of visitors today. This makes Mission 66 particularly significant for those working in planning, management, and design today in national parks. Mission 66 developed the landscapes and facilities people still use; it also established many basic assumptions about how people use their parks. The research questions described in the preceding chapters determined the general outline, specific case studies, and overall themes of the following narrative history of Mission 66.

Chapter 5: The National Park Dilemma and the Origins of Controversy

5.1 Early Origins

The first research questions formulated for this thesis reflected the awareness that Mission 66, whatever its built legacy, was as significant for the controversy and change it incited as much as it was for the development done under the program. Mission 66 helped precipitate the modern environmental movement and reactions to the program shaped the legislation and policies that are the parameters of national park management in the United States to this day. Inquiry as to the theoretical and historical origins of controversy around and reactions to Mission 66 therefore seemed necessary and worthwhile.

Such inquiries required looking back to the origins of the park idea. If the modern national park system is a product of the twentieth century, the controversy that engulfed Mission 66 in the early 1960s began centuries earlier. Concern over the destructiveness of Mission 66 may have been instigated by ongoing construction in the parks, but it also reprised an aesthetic controversy that was as old as the modern era itself. Since the eighteenth century, when the modern landscape park first appeared in the countryside of Great Britain, it had been disparaged by proponents of a more “wild” or “picturesque” landscape ideal, who saw “improved” parkland as overly managed and stripped of its natural diversity and visual interest. In various forms, a contest of contrasting landscape ideals has been constant ever since. If it began as an esoteric debate among squires and landlords, it continued as a fundamental critique of the process of landscape modernization generally, and the management of modern scenic reservations in particular.

Issues of eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics seem removed from those of park management in the twentieth century only because the British landscape park is rarely seen as a direct antecedent of American national parks. Postwar intellectual histories of the “national park idea” typically do not emphasize the history of such park development, in part because they analyze the idea primarily through literature and poetry. But the story of the physical construction of national parks clarifies historical dimensions sometimes obscured by the consideration of national parks strictly as wilderness. Connections between national and municipal parks in the United States, for example, are more evident in comparisons of how different parks (municipal, regional,

and national) were actually developed for public use. From overall planning concepts, to the design of park roads, to rustic landscape features and the use of pseudo-vernacular architectural themes, the development of national parks was influenced by earlier and contemporary municipal and regional park design.⁴⁹ The wilderness ideal is often described as the very antithesis of the urban park; the national park frontcountry landscape of roads, trails, picturesque buildings, and scenic views, however, is a close relative of many earlier and smaller landscape parks located in or near American cities.

The direct association between national and municipal park making suggests a longer and more involved history for the origins of the national park idea. The theory and technology of modern park making, in fact, can be traced to eighteenth-century Great Britain, not nineteenth-century Wyoming. And when considered in this way, it is more clear that American national parks have never been particularly benign or completely altruistic undertakings. The creation of large parks for the purpose of managing and appreciating scenery has almost always involved brutal dislocations of people with previous claims and rights. From the open-field agriculturists of England, to African Americans and Irish in New York, to the native tribal groups of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada, a heavy human price has been paid to create large parks, usually by those who could least afford it.⁵⁰ And great park makers, from Lancelot ("Capability") Brown, to Frederick Law Olmsted, to Stephen Mather, indeed represented and furthered the most powerful economic interests of their respective eras.

But in the post-World War II era, national parks have usually been defined in direct opposition to the process of landscape modernization occurring around them. As "wilderness," in the postwar sense, the parks have been considered the opposite of modernization and development, not as enabling instruments of "progress." This

⁴⁹ Although important distinctions existed between national park work and other types of landscape design, the development of rustic architecture and site work in national parks must be seen in the context of the American park movement as a whole. National park design in the 1920s was particularly influenced by Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles Eliot, and the work of what can be described as the "Fairsted School" of earlier municipal and regional park design. See Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 43-53, 95-115; McClelland, *Building the National Park*, 17-60.

⁵⁰ The fate of British villagers in the eighteenth century has been chronicled since Goldsmith's day. For overviews, see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape: A Social History of Land Ownership and the English Countryside* (London: George Phillip, 1987). The story of the depopulation of the Central Park site in New York is told in Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 64-73. Recent scholars have demonstrated that the creation of national parks entailed the removal of tribal groups, whose active presence belied the ideal of uninhabited, untouched land. See Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

perspective obscures the common lineage American national parks share with earlier urban parks, and even British landscape parks; and these roots are of particular significance for understanding American national park development during the postwar period.

The 1950s were an era of extensive modernization of the American landscape. The Mission 66 program attempted to adapt national park planning and design to exploit and mitigate the extraordinary geographic transformation taking place. Conrad Wirth and his colleagues felt obligated to redevelop and expand the park system at a scale commensurate to the change taking place around it, and to continue to make sure the (ever more numerous) public enjoyed relatively free and meaningful access. But during the same era, historians and preservation advocates consecrated the national park as the incarnation of wilderness, an ideal characterized above all by the absence of any sign of human history or presence. Conflict was inevitable; the new preservation advocates soon condemned Mission 66 as a travesty of national park (that is, wilderness) management. But in the radically changing American landscape of express highways, shopping centres, and vast residential subdivisions, Mission 66 nevertheless asserted a bold vision of how national parks could continue to function as public parks, and as integral features of the modernizing American landscape. If Mission 66 planners clearly failed to appreciate the significance of the wilderness ideal, they nevertheless achieved their intended goal of revising and perpetuating a tradition of American national park design during a critical period of cultural and landscape change.

If national parks had indeed preserved wilderness, preservation was the result of another project altogether. Until at least the 1930s, Olmstedian theory guided national park legislation and management policies: scenic preservation was justified for the sake of individual happiness and for the well being of society as a whole, not just for its own sake. The design and construction of roads and frontcountry landscapes therefore constituted a fundamental mandate for the new National Park Service in 1916. Preservation outside the context of public access and enjoyment, even for progressive advocates of the day, simply had not yet been fully described as a separate landscape ideal. Parks were not yet wilderness. If awareness of the science of ecology and the biological significance of the parks was growing at the Park Service by the 1930s, the

bureau remained overwhelmingly a park development agency.⁵¹ Undeveloped backcountry may have been *de facto* wilderness, but the visiting public was (and often still is) more likely to perceive it in aesthetic terms, as the middleground and background of vast landscape compositions. In this sense, the park frontcountry was conceived as an enabling foreground, providing both physical access (the road corridor) and conceptual entry into the scene (comparable to the foreground of a painted landscape). The frontcountry was planned as an extended viewing platform that structured the emotional appreciation of park scenery. In its details, it was designed to complete perceived landscape compositions with appropriately scaled and textured foreground elements. This pictorial conception of the place, together with the design and construction of the mediating frontcountry landscape itself, was the essence of American national park making throughout the rustic era.⁵²

The debates that Mission 66 inspired in the United States in the 1960s echoed controversies that had begun centuries earlier, when the role of the landscape park in the historical process of landscape modernization first crystallized. The modern landscape park first appeared in Great Britain in the eighteenth century during another period of enormous and disorienting landscape change. As industrial and agricultural revolution transformed British society, land enclosure, canal and turnpike construction, and urbanization reorganized patterns of daily lives and of entire landscapes. Landlords invested capital directly in the land, increasing its productivity (and profitability) many times over. In thousands of parishes, ancient patterns of “open fields,” “commons,” and “wastes” gave way to a new countryside of “improved” land and modernized, market agriculture. The medieval stability of village life was violently replaced by new physical and social mobility, amid rapid growth in populations. Massive human migrations were set in motion as many villagers were forced off the land and many others were lured by the promise of new occupations in rapidly growing industrial centres. Although many of these trends had begun centuries earlier, they accelerated and intensified during the eighteenth century, transforming entire regions. The unprecedented process fed on its

⁵¹ Richard West Sellars describes the decades-long (and ongoing) struggle to convince the Park Service to manage national parks more strictly in accordance with ecological science and less for the facilitation of public enjoyment. See Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁵² A related metaphor for national park frontcountries might be what another postwar scholar, Leo Marx, described (not necessarily in reference to parks) as the “middle landscape”: an American “pastoral ideal...located in a middle ground somewhere ‘between,’ yet in a transcendent relation to, the opposing (cont.)

own profit-making potential, and accelerated in the second half of the century. Nothing like the modernization of the British landscape had ever occurred before.⁵³ Perhaps one period of landscape change comparable in novelty and intensity, however, occurred in the United States after World War II, as American cities turned inside out and exploded along the rapidly developing corridors of the Interstate Highway system.

The transformation of British society and geography in the eighteenth century was obviously a complex and diverse phenomenon. Nevertheless, distinctive landscape patterns and instruments of landscape change emerged during this period, which together can be characterized, in a general way, as elements of a modern topography. The enclosure of land for the purposes of "improvement" was one such instrument. Enclosure entailed redrawing property lines in entire districts or parishes, in order to assert private ownership rights (often over formerly common lands), ultimately with the purpose of increasing yields and profits. The configurations of enclosed land varied according to local social and topographic conditions, but in many cases ancient "open" fields (typical of more communal, village agriculture) were enclosed by fences or hedges, creating a quiltwork of smaller, squarish fields. In other cases, ancient wastes, fens, or woods were enclosed and put into agricultural production through the application of new methods of drainage, soil improvement, and crop rotations. The process accelerated rapidly as Parliament, acting on behalf of major landowners, passed thousands of acts of enclosure between 1750 and 1815.⁵⁴ What became known as "parliamentary enclosure" greatly advanced the science of surveying, and prefigured the division and subdivision of land soon underway in the United States. In North America, however, the territorial claims of various tribal groups were even more easily ignored than the traditional usufruct of open field farmers. As a result, the redistribution of land for "settlement" (and national park

forces of civilization and nature." Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 23-33.

⁵³ What is generalized here as the process of "landscape modernization" began, in some aspects, long before the eighteenth century, and continues, in other aspects, today. The British countryside was not the product strictly of the eighteenth century; the enclosure of land, for example, had a long history including medieval and post-medieval phases. But in the second half of the eighteenth century the process accelerated dramatically, in what Hoskins and others describe as a "revolution." W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* [1955] Reprinted (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 137-154, 177-210; Williams, *The Country and the City*, 96-107; Williamson and Bellamy, *Property and Landscape*, 94-115. Also see Michael Reed, *The Georgian Triumph: 1700-1830* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 31-81; Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), 119-204. For insightful analysis of the landscape of enclosure and the contemporary rise of landscape painting and "rustic tradition," see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1-54.

⁵⁴ Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 177-210.

making) in the United States was uncomplicated by previous patterns of ownership, and proceeded with Cartesian simplicity in the vast rectangular survey of townships and land "sections" authorized by Congress in the 1785 Land Ordinance.⁵⁵

New transportation corridors, especially roads and canals, were a second archetypal characteristic of the modernizing landscape in Great Britain, and soon in British North America, as well. Growing cities created markets for agricultural surplus (the ultimate reason for the modernization of the countryside), and market agriculture demanded cheaper movement of goods. The reorganization of land tenure achieved through acts of enclosure made it possible to establish relatively direct rights-of-way, especially for new "enclosure roads."⁵⁶ In addition, a frenzy of speculative turnpike and canal construction in the eighteenth century helped make the modern landscape one of unprecedented physical mobility. Engineers devised new systems of impervious road surfaces, and manufacturers produced carriages with improved suspensions. Travel became more convenient and desirable for some, and an imposed necessity for others. Entire populations were on the move, leaving ancestral villages for mushrooming cities (or for new land and farms in New England). If the countryside seemed depopulated by these trends, a burgeoning, urban middle class soon began a reverse invasion. For them, the accessibility of the modern landscape made possible a new and distinctly modern form of recreation: touring the countryside in search of scenic beauty.⁵⁷

A third instrument of landscape modernization that emerged in Britain at this time was the modern landscape park. The word "park" derived from the Middle English word for a pale forest enclosure, and the medieval hunting park was a form of royal privilege that appropriated game and other forest products to a particular feudal lord. But by the seventeenth century, the economic and social purposes of ancient hunting parks had changed significantly, altering how these landscapes were perceived and managed. Many landowners valued their parks more as estates (particularly as the settings for manor houses), than merely as larders of venison and acorn mast. Parkland began to be managed, together with more formal grounds around the house, as components of a villa landscape, or "landscape garden," that featured views of surrounding forests, as well as access to the more "wild" or "natural" landscape of the increasingly managed park. The

⁵⁵ See Hildegard Binder Johnson, "Towards a National Landscape," in *The Making of the American Landscape*, Michael P. Conzen, ed. (Boston: Hyman Unwin, 1990), 127-145.

⁵⁶ Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 233-254.

⁵⁷ See Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

origins of the English landscape garden have been the subject of intense interest among art historians, who emphasize the influence of Classical and Italian Renaissance culture as well as a developed taste for seventeenth-century landscape painting.⁵⁸ Other historians have pointed out that England had been almost entirely deforested by the seventeenth century, and that there were economic as well as aesthetic and iconographic reasons for landowners to become concerned with silviculture and the management of parkland for grazing and timber production.⁵⁹ The intrinsic formal qualities of the ancient park landscapes themselves also helped define the “natural” aesthetic of the landscape garden. Topography, climate, and indigenous vegetation—combined with generations of medieval forest management practices—had formed the canvas of coppices, glades, woods, and fish ponds upon which park owners and their gardeners began to delineate how modern “nature” should look.⁶⁰

By the mid-eighteenth century, the interest in managing the park landscape itself increased to such a point that the older Baroque parterres and knot gardens around the house fell into disfavour, often to the point of their complete removal. Stripped of ornamental gardens, the house now appeared set in isolation in the park landscape, separated from grazing stock only by the deceptive “ha-ha,” or sunken fence. The early Georgian landscape garden of classical emblems and allusions was often filled with temples, grottoes, and statuary. But the true landscape park that emerged at mid-century dispensed with many of these more literary devices, yielding to a purer, more expressive artistic vision restricted to the essential materials of the earth itself: landform, trees, water, light, and space. If its roots went deep, even to Classical pastoralism, the modern landscape park was a dramatically new and minimalist art form, one primarily concerned

⁵⁸ See, for example, Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study Chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa on English Taste, 1700-1800* [1925] (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965); B. Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste, 1619-1800* [1937] (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1958), vol. 2, 116-230; Peter Willis, ed., *Furor Hortensis: Essays on the History of the English Landscape Garden in Memory of H.F. Clark* (Edinburgh: Elysium Press Limited, 1974); David C. Streatfield, “Art and Nature in the English Landscape Garden: Design Theory and Practice, 1700-1818,” in David C. Streatfield and Alistair M. Duckworth, *Landscape in the Gardens and the Literature of Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles: University of California, Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981), 3-87; John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination, 1600-1750* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 181-222; John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden: 1620-1820* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 1-45.

⁵⁹ See Douglas Chambers, *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden: Botany, Trees, and the “Georgics”* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1993), 1-11, 33-80, 121-155; Tom Williamson, “The Landscape Park: Economics, Art, and Ideology,” *Journal of Garden History* 13, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1993): 49-55.

with the expressive power of landscape form, line, and colour rather than emblematic references to the poetry of Virgil or Horace.⁶¹ The interest in the evocative power of form over the intellectual content of allusion eventually indicated a beginning of modern aesthetics. The landscape park, composed of meadows, groups of trees, and placid sheets of water, indicated a new and distinctly modern sensibility toward the appreciation of landscape scenery, one for which literary education meant less than sensibilities developed through an appreciation for formal composition. Appreciating land as landscape depended on an individual's emotional response to "landscape effects," not necessarily on familiarity with the classics. This was true not only in the landscape park (where to a certain degree experiences could be contrived) but in the broader and increasingly accessible countryside as a whole, which legions of tourists were soon combing in search of the picturesque.

The novelty of the landscape park—arguably the first modern art form—corresponds closely to the unprecedented changes taking place in the landscape surrounding it. Perhaps the most salient fact of the history of the landscape park in Britain is that it flowered precisely as parliamentary enclosure reached its height, roughly between 1750 and 1815. As the art historian Ann Bermingham observes, the entire awakening to the beauty of the "rustic" countryside, especially on the part of urban middle classes, occurred precisely as the rural landscape of village agriculture was being replaced by patterns of enclosed land and modern farmsteads. At the same time, amateur landscape designers such as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight were transforming their estates and formal gardens into extensive, "natural" landscape parks.⁶² Bermingham and others have suggested that the modern landscape park was, above all, defined by its contrast to the surrounding, modernizing landscape, and was even an attempt to recreate the expansiveness of the pre-modern landscape that was disappearing under networks of hawthorn hedges and new roads. But the modern park had as little in common with the landscape of open field agriculture as it did with its earlier incarnation as medieval hunting preserve. If it was a landscape of sweeping expanses (with rarely so much as a fence or stile in sight) its meadows were devoted to grazing animals, not villagers tending crops. The landowners who developed landscape parks, in fact, often enclosed open

⁶⁰ Williams, *The Country and the City*, 120-126; Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9-14; Susan Lasdun, *The English Park: Royal, Private, and Public* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1991), 5-38.

⁶¹ Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 19-34.

⁶² Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 10-14.

fields to further expand their parkland. Far from being nostalgic, these park makers generally had profited from change, and had enclosed land and modernized farms themselves. As a class, they were familiar with the benefits and technology of land “improvement,” and often shared an optimism regarding the new social and landscape organizations they were instigating.

Many landowners, such as Price and Knight, were talented landscape designers and theorists; but many more looked to a new kind of professional “improver” to manage their parks and gardens. Preeminent among these was Lancelot Brown, who began his career in the 1740s working for another accomplished amateur, Lord Cobham, at Stowe. By 1751, Brown had established a growing practice as an independent improver, and although he designed Palladian country houses as well as parks, over the next thirty-five years he became famous as the most prolific and successful landscape designer of his day.⁶³ This prodigious park maker designed and supervised the construction of scores of landscapes in the “modern,” or “natural,” style. His work, including the parks at Milton Abbey and Blenheim among many others, revealed and exploited the inherent scenic potential of a site by altering it as necessary to conform to compositional rules derived ultimately from “nature.” The concept and visual appearance of nature itself, of course, had been transformed over the previous century through the advance of modern science, as well as landscape painting and descriptive poetry. Brown’s parks were indeed “natural,” in the sense that analysis of the natural suitabilities of a site guided their design; scientific as well as poetic inventory and observation lay at the heart of the new design process. But this in no sense implied that they were not the results of major landscape manipulation. Park making involved the same technologies of land drainage, road construction, scientific forestry, dam construction, and earth moving that was transforming the countryside as a whole. But new lakes created by Brown appeared where topography and watersheds provided the best opportunities for dam building, not according to the imposed geometries of Baroque architectural planning. New park drives curved and followed undulations of land, creating cinemagraphic experiences of shifting views, rather than the static, scenographic perspectives typical of straight avenues. Irregular clumps and belts of trees framed scenic compositions and concealed boundaries in ways that *allées* of clipped lindens never could, and they were also more efficient

⁶³ See Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* [1950] New Edition (Boston: Faber and Faber Limited, 1975); Roger Turner, *Capability Brown and the Eighteenth Century English Landscape* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).

timber plantations. The natural style combined the engineering efficiency of modern sciences and the flexible aesthetics of the picturesque, and in this sense can be seen as the origin of modern land planning. Brown's landscape park was both a quintessentially modern art form, and a physical prototype of the modern idea of nature.

The central theory of modern park making insisted that consultation and analysis of the existing character of a landscape should enlighten its management and modernization: nature should guide progress. Debates over the direction and even the desirability of modern progress have ensued ever since, and these discourses have often entailed new or altered concepts of what "nature" actually is or how it should be described. Already by the 1760s, William Chambers, a court architect who designed the pagoda and other structures for the royal gardens at Kew, condemned Brown's parks for their lack of variety and intellectual content. Chambers's Orientalism led him to suggest that the original inspiration for the "natural" landscape garden had been Chinese, and he therefore advocated a return to Chinese principles (at least as he imagined them) in gardening, a direction that involved a more intricate and frankly artificial representation of nature.⁶⁴ Criticism of Brown reached a peak after his death, when a famous controversy regarding the true nature of the "picturesque" erupted in the 1790s. Richard Payne Knight, in his remarkable poem, *The Landscape* (1794), denounced "the improver's desolating hand," and claimed that the "system of picturesque improvement, employed by the late Mr. Brown and his followers, is the very reverse of picturesque." Modern park improvers, in other words, were failing to be guided by the truly picturesque aesthetic qualities, and therefore left "shaven and defaced" the "goddess" (nature) they professed to improve. Knight's polemic was an aesthetic critique, not an environmentalist argument; nevertheless he confessed to "preferring the rich and natural scenes of Windsor or New Forest to the shaven parks and gardens of either of those

⁶⁴ Chambers had been to China, but the sources for his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) were probably accounts and illustrations published by other European travellers. The Orientalist critique of modern park making has persisted in various guises (i.e., "le jardin anglo-chinois"), and even continued in the post-World War II era in the form of an enthusiasm for Eastern philosophy and garden design among American environmentalists (Gary Snyder, for example) and landscape architects (including Garrett Eckbo and James Rose). For approachable overviews of eighteenth-century debates regarding landscape and aesthetic theory, see Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*, 145-166; Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 128-185; Allen, *Tides in English Taste*, 115-143; Hunt and Willis, *The Genius of the Place*, 318-325, 342-367; Stephen Daniels, "The Political Iconography of Woodland in Later Georgian England," in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape*. Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 9 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 43-82.

places,” and called for a less maintained, more rugged and “natural” landscape.⁶⁵ His Romantic appeal for the wild over the improved, and his condemnation of the “insipid” neatness of mowed lawns and placid lakes make his poem a landmark in the development of what can be called a wilderness aesthetic. At the heart of the more wild “picturesque” he described was a nature that suffered only degradation when actively managed; a nature that did not guide progress but was destroyed by it. On the other side of these “paper wars,” the ideal of the modern park (and the artistic reputation of Lancelot Brown) was defended with equal conviction by Humphry Repton, who had inherited Brown’s client list, and who had refined the profession of “improving” parks into what he called “landscape gardening.” Other public figures, such as Horace Walpole, also rejected criticisms of Brown and the modern style. Walpole was another accomplished amateur park designer and a progenitor of the Gothic Revival. He was also the son of Britain’s first prime minister, and the political implications of revolutionary changes in land management (to say nothing of actual revolution in Europe) fuelled the contemporary discourse on landscape aesthetics.

Controversies aside, by the end of the eighteenth century the modern park, as defined above all by Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton, embodied an ideal of modern progress implemented by a class of enlightened landlords. Landscape parks formed an integral part of the modern topography that was being inscribed over more ancient landscape patterns, and they expressed the dominant values of a rapidly industrializing society. The pace of private park making, however, slowed in the early nineteenth century. The collapse of corn prices and other economic changes at the end of the Napoleonic Wars destabilized the economy of market agriculture, and the creation of private parks became increasingly difficult and expensive as the industrial economy matured and spread further into the countryside. No additional private parks were created after an agricultural depression in the 1880s.⁶⁶

But the modern park only began as a private park; as it evolved it was destined to be the “public” park. This transition occurred first in parks near or in growing cities, especially London’s Royal Parks, some of which were being opened to limited use by the public already in the seventeenth century. By the early nineteenth century, these former hunting parks had been surrounded by the city and opened to the public, a change that

⁶⁵ Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem in Three Books*, Second Edition [1795] (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1972), viii, 2, 17-18, 23, 31.

⁶⁶ Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 172-174.

was accompanied (at St. James's and Hyde parks, for example) by the redevelopment of these landscapes in the "modern," or "natural" style.⁶⁷ Other European cities also were opening formerly private parks and gardens for public recreation, a process greatly accelerated in Europe by political upheaval. By the 1840s, municipal governments began to acquire property on their own in order to develop them as semi-public arboreta and public parks.⁶⁸ These landscapes, designed by professional landscape gardeners such as J. C. Loudon and Joseph Paxton in Britain, or Peter Josef Lenné in Germany, adapted the rural art of park design in order to provide "natural" settings that could be accessible and convenient for large numbers of visitors. Promenades, carriage drives, and the enjoyment of scenery in the landscape park were quickly established as basic amenities of modern, urban, middle-class life. And of course most of these public landscapes were variations of the natural or English style: reifications of the modern nature that guided progress towards an increasingly urban, industrialized, and hopefully healthful and democratic future.⁶⁹

By the mid-nineteenth century, governments had replaced landlords as the principal park makers in Europe, and municipalities laid out new parks, not just to provide public amenities, but as a means of controlling the direction and character of urban growth. In Paris, Berlin, London, and soon New York, landscape gardeners (called landscape architects in the United States) planned urban expansion by employing techniques derived from park making. New areas to be urbanized were studied in terms of topography, hydrology, and other physical and aesthetic qualities; the various functions and infrastructures of the city (particularly new park and boulevard systems) could ideally then be sited and developed where suggested by the natural suitabilities of sites. But if park making developed into city planning, modern parks, like their medieval forebears, were still a means of enclosing and appropriating—that is preserving—certain lands and their resources from other, perhaps more destructive, uses or activities. And in the nineteenth century, the most valuable resources to be preserved in parks were not timber or pasture, but landscape scenery and recreational opportunities. And the beneficiaries of

⁶⁷ George F. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: The Architectural Press, 1966), 19-52.

⁶⁸ Perhaps the first parks developed specifically for such public use were the German "volksgartens," particularly the Englischer Garten in Munich, designed by Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell in 1789. Although open to the public and designed in the modern (or "English") style, early German parks were originally a form of aristocratic largesse, not municipal undertakings.

⁶⁹ Lasdun, *The English Park*, 119-166; Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10-20.

such preservation, increasingly, were not estate owners, but the expanding public: a term usually implying that group of middleclass, mostly urban and suburban, salaried workers and businesspeople that had grown up as a function of industrialization.

In the United States, there had never been a tradition of private park making and neither were there royal parks to be opened to the public. A genocidal combination of disease and warfare had created an apparently unoccupied, “virgin” land on the Atlantic seaboard, ready to be distributed to whoever could “improve” it. Emparking forest resources made little sense when rich new lands seemed always available for the taking. But by the mid-nineteenth century, American cities had grown large and unhealthy, especially in the Northeast. Following the popular success of Central Park in New York, designed by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted in 1858, scores of municipalities appointed “park commissions” to acquire land and develop it as necessary to create modern, public park systems. New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and soon Chicago, Minneapolis, Denver, and San Francisco and many other cities acquired land for developing a range of formal landscape types, including playgrounds, parkways, and of course large parks, which were larger reservations specifically devoted to the enhancement and enjoyment of “natural” scenery.

Park commissions were early city planning entities in many American cities, and the techniques of park making had an enormous influence on American urbanism.⁷⁰ But the American park movement only began at the municipal level. The potential for parks to preserve scenic areas in suburbs and even farther from the city soon produced results that were more far reaching than ever would have been possible in Europe. By the 1890s, what became known as “scenic preservation” was the primary emphasis in the planning of large parks, and the sponsorship of such projects rose to the county, state, and federal levels of government. The preservation of scenic areas through the establishment of large-scale, public parks became a principal instrument of landscape modernization in the United States, and a defining characteristic of the modern topography being rapidly delineated over more ancient patterns of land use and ownership.

The relationship of land preservation to modern park making has been problematic since Richard Payne Knight’s day. Preservation itself is a word that contains

⁷⁰ See Albert Fein, ed., *Landscape Into Cityscape: Frederick Law Olmsted’s Plans for a Greater New York City* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1967); David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

its own antonym, in the sense that nothing is preserved from change without making essential change in what is to be preserved. Early landscape parks in Britain preserved landscapes—even while transforming them—since parkland was spared the more commercial uses of market agriculture and industrialization. But establishing such a reservation implied the active imposition of, at the very least, new values and priorities in the management of land, often to the detriment of older uses or perceived values. The result was a pervasive reconceptualization of land as landscape, or nature, not a perpetuation of pre-modern conditions. Park making also involved some degree of physical restructuring of land, whether this meant the extensive improvements of urban landscape parks, or the far more limited disturbances in suburban scenic reservations. But in either extreme, the natural style of landscape management combined improvement and preservation as aspects of the same project. While some areas of park sites were changed extensively (lakes were excavated and greenswards were graded, for example), many other areas were left untouched (even in urban parks). And the overall organization of the park landscape was determined, not by the imposition of “artificial” plan geometries, but by a response to the “natural” aesthetic character and physical potentials of the site. The development of modern parks, in other words, was a profoundly different process than the construction of architectonic gardens had been. Even great municipal parks of the nineteenth century (such as Central Park), which were laden with roads, paths, reservoirs, and other infrastructure to serve millions of visitors, were not man-made landscapes; they were improved landscapes. And whether park designers attempted to improve entire views and scenic compositions, or simply provided access to an already scenic area, improvements were based in a response to the existing character, or genius, of a place. The success of modern park making as a means of preservation has always depended on adhering to nature as an (ever mutable) aesthetic guide, and on a calculated tension between doing and not doing. Preservation demanded change, in other words, but that change in turn was modelled on “nature.” The modern idea of nature itself developed to some degree as a product of landscape preservation; park making not only preserved nature, it helped invent it along the way. To some degree, modern nature became whatever the results of preservation ended up being.⁷¹

⁷¹ For insightful analysis of the perils and complexities of “preserving nature,” see Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*. When Sellars states, however, that “no precedent existed for intentionally and perpetually maintaining large tracts of land in their ‘natural condition’” (p. 22) at the time Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., was drafting the National Park Service “Organic Act” (1916), the author is relying on his own (essentially post-World War II) meaning of “natural,” as nothing less than unpopulated wilderness. (cont.)

5.2 Early Scenic Preservation and Automotive Tourism

By the early 1890s, the landscape architect Charles Eliot (Olmsted's most important protégé) was planning and advocating a system of "scenic reservations" in the suburbs around Boston. These reservations were far larger than the municipal parks Olmsted had designed for the city of Boston, and they also required far less improvement. Eliot identified areas for inclusion in the systems based on their existing landscape character. To become landscape parks, they required little more than the addition of carriage roads, trails, and shelters for public convenience (basically the treatment Olmsted had suggested for the north end of Central Park in 1858, and for Yosemite Valley in 1865). The system of reservations was also planned on a proto-ecological basis; Eliot intended that a range of different landscape types, including riparian, highland, lowland, and coastal, should all be represented.⁷² Little manipulation was required in expansive reservations such as Middlesex Fells or Blue Hills, and Eliot did not feel that there would ever be "any need of artificially modifying...[the reservations] to any considerable degree." Carriage roads and trails would be necessary, he continued, "to make the scenery accessible"; but these would be no more than "mere slender threads of graded surface winding over and among the huge natural forms of the ground."⁷³ Improvement, however, certainly remained part of the formula for park making. What Eliot called "landscape forestry" was a particular concern. Certain views, especially those from accessible public overlooks, were kept open, older specimen trees were protected from encroaching saplings, and dead wood was removed. "The axe must be used," he insisted, "...but the axe must be used with discretion." Above all, Eliot emphasized that "absurd traces of formality" be avoided in the grading, planting, and other work necessary in the construction of park developed areas. The large park, "in which scenery is the main object of pursuit," demanded very different treatment from smaller parks or town squares.⁷⁴

Early national parks—and even municipal parks—also preserved nature, although a nature defined more in visual terms ("scenic preservation") than in the terms of the still emerging science of ecology.

⁷² Charles W. Eliot, *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect: A Lover of Nature and of His Kind Who Trained Himself for a New Profession, Practised It Happily, and Through It Wrought Much Good* [1902] (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 420-451.

⁷³ Charles Eliot, *Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston* (Boston: Lamson, Wolfe and Company, 1898), 7.

⁷⁴ Eliot, *Charles Eliot*, 709-736.

As the context for public park making grew more distant from the city, the balance between doing and not doing shifted. In scenic reservations around not only Boston, but soon New York, Chicago, and other cities, park planners emphasized a desire to “interfere with” natural landscapes as little as possible.⁷⁵ The modern park, as scenic reservation, increasingly was seen as a means for governments to preserve large—even vast—natural areas for public enjoyment. As long as development was kept to a minimum and “harmonized with nature,” park making could successfully “preserve” landscapes. Frederick Law Olmsted thoroughly described these ideas in his 1865 report for Yosemite Valley, and in so doing laid the intellectual foundations for the development of a national park system. Other park planners, such as Eliot, understood that the improvement of large parks would increasingly be a matter of designing specific developed areas or corridors, leaving the great majority of the park as undisturbed as possible in most ways (although still “managed” where necessary to maintain characteristic features such as open meadows, views, or significant specimen plants). The Progressive Era saw a flurry of state and national park proposals, mostly intended to preserve outstanding natural features and areas as public parks. From Mount Rainier and Rocky Mountain national parks, to Lake Itasca and the Dalles of the St. Croix, to the Finger Lakes and the Palisades, “scenic preservationists” succeeded in having both Congress and state legislatures set aside large (often threatened) areas as public parks.⁷⁶ And when, beginning around 1911, leading advocates such as J. Horace McFarland and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., began to press for the creation of a *national* park commission (the National Park Service), this was the tradition of park making that shaped the early policies and intended goals of the new federal bureau. For these Progressive Era preservationists, preserving places by facilitating public enjoyment of them was not an ironic or conflicting mandate; it was, on the contrary, the very premise of the American park movement.

⁷⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, in their original description of the design for Central Park (1858), wrote that in the relatively undisturbed (and already scenic) north end of the site, it was “desirable to interfere with [the existing landscape] . . . as little as possible.” Charles E. Beveridge and Schuyler, David, eds., *Creating Central Park, 1857-1861*. The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume III (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 119.

⁷⁶ For overviews of early state park history, see Raymond H. Torrey, *State Parks and Recreational Uses of State Forests in the United States* (Washington, DC: National Conference on State Parks, 1926); Beatrice Ward Nelson, *State Recreation: Parks, Forests and Game Preserves* (Washington, DC: National Conference on State Parks, Inc., 1928). In 1921, when the National Park Service helped organize a national conference of state parks, nineteen states already had state park systems in place. See National Conference on State Parks, *Proceedings of the National Conferences on State Parks, 1922-24*. 4 vols. (Washington, DC: National Conference on State Parks).

The large scenic reservation became the distinctly American contribution to the development of the modern park. In just a few decades, the American park had transformed city and regional planning, and established the idea that government at the local, state, or federal level could act as an enlightened landlord—that is on behalf of the public—and empark land as a means of appropriating and preserving examples of the country's most scenic regions. In Great Britain, however, private park making had ended completely and the public park never reached the proportions that it did in the United States. There were many geographic and perhaps sociological reasons why the momentum of modern, public park making shifted decisively to the United States. But perhaps the most important factor was that American scenic reservations became primary destinations for the legions of modern tourists that were pouring out of cities and suburbs by the 1880s. In Great Britain (and most of Europe) domestic tourists were attracted by the scenic countryside itself, which generally was privately, not publicly, owned.⁷⁷ But the millions of mostly middle-class tourists in the United States were often headed for various regional, state, or national parks. By the 1910s, many of these tourists were travelling in new automobiles, and the juggernaut of modern automotive tourism, for better or worse, became the economic power behind campaigns to create scenic reservations. American park making, even when it “preserved” places from other forms of exploitation, served the economic and industrial interests that prospered as tourists took to the road in order to get “back to nature.”

Modern tourism has been thoroughly maligned by critics and historians over the last fifty years. None have been more harsh than post-World War II wilderness advocates, who realized that roads, cars, and tourists could be nearly as destructive to previously inaccessible places as loggers, miners, or dam builders would have been.⁷⁸ Accompanied by highway construction, roadside commercial development, and the degradation of both natural systems and a regional sense of place, the destructive power of modern tourism cannot be denied. But the aesthetic appreciation of landscape

⁷⁷ The British countryside eventually required preservation efforts, as well. English and Welsh “national parks” established after World War II allow residents and property owners to continue their lives and activities on the land, although under a new set of regional land-use controls. The goal is to perpetuate traditional landscapes while protecting them from postwar urban sprawl and other pressures. This arrangement (a non-regulatory version of which is often called a “heritage area” in the United States) may be a successor to the modern landscape park, but obviously differs profoundly from it.

⁷⁸ Aldo Leopold identified “mechanized recreation” as a destroyer of wilderness values, and Edward Abbey described “Industrial Tourism” in the same terms. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* [1949] (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 269-272; Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* [1968] (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 45-67.

scenery—the ultimate reason for so much of modern tourism—has also proved to be an emotional experience that few people are willing to live entirely without. Enjoying scenic beauty cannot be dismissed as merely a superficial experience. As perhaps the most widespread form of recreation in industrial nations, it has constituted a communion with the “natural” world that many, including the elder Olmsted, have considered a prerequisite to human happiness in the context of modern society. This communion has taken many forms, such as intense interest in landscape painting, descriptive poetry, natural history, all of which developed (along with the practice of modern park making) in the eighteenth century. But the emotional reconnection to what was, from that point on, perceived as the “landscape” was above all linked to the phenomenon of tourism. Eighteenth-century guidebooks to the picturesque Lake District and ancient forests of Britain set the pattern for the appreciation of the Hudson Valley and the White Mountains, both of which were destinations for American tourists by the 1820s. Ever since, Americans have been indefatigable seekers of scenic beauty. Life in new cities and suburbs, while usually more comfortable and less onerous than farm life had been, nevertheless created the need to invent and appreciate “nature” and “landscape” to rediscover and value. And that reconnection often took the form of an excursion in search of scenery, which (at least in the United States) has often been found along the roads, trails, and overlooks of public parks.

To a significant degree, modern tourism is inseparable from any conception we have of “landscape,” and we all know “nature” essentially as tourists. And despite its drawbacks, the popularity of modern automotive tourism and the (admittedly sometimes fleeting) appreciation of landscape beauty it made possible were principal reasons for the success of scenic preservation in the early twentieth century. The powerful political and economic links between automotive tourism and the American park movement helped scenic preservationists convince Congress and state legislatures to create and expand park systems, and in 1916 establish the National Park Service.

But if automotive tourism infused scenic preservation with political influence, it also inevitably began to erode the effectiveness of parks as a means of preservation. The numbers of cars and tourists were manageable at first; but those numbers increased exponentially in the coming decades. The art of modern park making, with its careful balance of doing and not doing, was challenged to increase the capacity of scenic places to provide enjoyment without destroying the scenery and wildlife that were to be enjoyed.

5.3 Automotive Tourism and National Parks

The National Park Service was established specifically to accommodate automotive tourism while preserving the scenic landscapes tourists visited. There has been much discussion of the "Organic Act" that established the Park Service in 1916, and whether it gave priority to "preservation" or "enjoyment."⁷⁹ But the act was unequivocal in its thoroughly Olmstedian philosophy that the *purpose* of preservation was *for* enjoyment. Preservation is simply not discussed in the act outside the context of public enjoyment. The most often quoted portion of the 1916 Park Service legislation was written by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and states that the fundamental purpose of the parks is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."⁸⁰ For the younger Olmsted, J. Horace McFarland, Horace Albright, and the other drafters of the act, this amounted to a mandate to manage national parks as public parks, not as the quasi-private resorts they had been up to that point. As long as most park visitors still arrived by train, travelled by concessioner livery services, and stayed in hotels run by the railroads, the parks could be perceived as privately run businesses, not as truly public places. Congress was therefore less likely to be concerned with their preservation or the creation of a new federal bureau to manage them. But by 1916, over 14,000 visitors arrived at Yosemite Valley by car, slightly more than arrived by railroad that year.⁸¹ By 1919, Mather reported that three quarters of the visitors to Yosemite Valley arrived in their own cars, and in 1920 he asserted that the "great bulk of travel" to all the parks was by automobile⁸² Between 1900 and 1920, the number of visits to the national park system went up from about 100,000 to over one million. Automobile registrations in the United

⁷⁹ It is clear that if such an inference must be made, the act places the first priority on preservation. See Donald C. Swain, "The Passage of the National Park Service Act of 1916," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50, no. 1 (Fall 1966): Ernest Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland: A Thorn for Beauty* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1995), 173-193; 4-17; Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 28-46, 298-299 fn 2; Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 322 fn 57, 324 fn 87; Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 7-10, 46-47.

⁸⁰ For the full text see Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 46-47.

⁸¹ Runte, *Yosemite*, 121.

⁸² Stephen T. Mather, "The Ideals and Policy of the National Park Service Particularly in Relation to Yosemite National Park," in Ansel F. Hall, ed., *Handbook of Yosemite National Park* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 77-86; Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1920 Annual Report*, 37-44.

States during the same period rose from about 8,000 to over eight million⁸³ In the first *Annual Report* of the Park Service in 1917, Horace Albright remarked on “an astonishing increase in the number of cars in the national parks” during the previous four summers, and reported with satisfaction that national park superintendents had already abandoned all restrictions on the use of automobiles.⁸⁴

In the nineteenth century, the park visiting public had been defined as those who could walk or ride to nearby municipal or regional parks; the twentieth-century national park public, however, was defined as those who could own cars and use them to arrive at more distant destinations. As automobile ownership increased and became widespread among the middle class, automotive tourism transformed the federal scenic reservations into true “public” parks, in this sense. This process began before the Park Service had been established, and the Park Service Organic Act was both the evidence and the result of the transformation. By that time, scores of municipal, county, state, and even interstate park commissions were active in the United States, and the precedent of governments preserving scenic areas on behalf of the (automotive) public was well established. Once Congress understood the national parks were indeed being used by the public at large, the creation of a new (in this case federal) park commission was justified and desirable.

The mandate of “preservation and improvement” (to borrow the language of the 1864 Yosemite Grant) implicit in the 1916 Park Service legislation suggested that Congress wanted to facilitate and enhance the now automotive public’s enjoyment of the national parks. This also was (and some would say has remained) the principal justification for congressional park appropriations. And park appropriations soon increased dramatically. Horace Albright, in particular, succeeded in putting funding for parks on a par with another category of public landscape improvements that Congress had recently decided to subsidize at unprecedented levels: the “federal-aid” highways. In 1916, the same year Congress created the Park Service, it passed the Federal Aid to Highways Act, which authorized \$75 million for state highway improvements over the next five years, and initiated the commitment to public highway funding that continues to

⁸³ John B. Rae, *The Road and Car in American Life* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 50; James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 37-39.

⁸⁴ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1917 Annual Report*, 18-22. The previous year, Stephen Mather had described an “astonishing increase in motor travel” to the parks. Mather, *Progress in the Development of the National Parks*, 5.

the present day.⁸⁵ By 1922, Mather and Albright began lobbying for a similar level of commitment to fund roads within national parks. As a result, in 1924 Congress authorized \$7.5 million for park roads over three years, almost doubling the total Park Service budget for 1925 to over \$3 million. The situation in the parks had indeed become untenable, because improved state highways and national forest roads (built through the “federal aid” legislation) had made the parks more accessible than ever to tourists in cars. With so many visitors now driving to national parks (and “overcrowding” existing facilities), the demand to improve roads, campgrounds, comfort stations, and other infrastructure for automotive tourism was inevitable.

Mather and Albright presented the modernization of the national park system as a necessary adjunct to the subsidization of a national highway system, and permanently linked federal highways and national parks in terms of the appropriations that would pay for them.⁸⁶ This relationship, if informal, would continue through the twentieth century, reaching an apogee in 1956, the year both the Interstate Highway Act, and the Park Service’s Mission 66 program, were launched.

5.4 The National Park “Dilemma”

Criticism of Park Service policy by “purists” had flared almost as soon as the agency was created. In the 1920s unprecedented numbers of people in cars crowded Yosemite Valley, the south rim of the Grand Canyon, the Paradise Valley area of Mount Rainier, and other popular national park destinations. What can be described as the modern, organized campaign for “wilderness” began in the 1920s, and it was in large part a reaction—as the creation of the Park Service had been—to the vast expansion of outdoor recreation and tourism made possible by the automobile.⁸⁷ For those who considered Yosemite Valley already “spoiled,” or who condemned the “ballyhoo” at the

⁸⁵ Because roads in national parks were non-commercial, they received none of these funds; national forest roads, however, did receive about 10% of the total. Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 46-59.

⁸⁶ Mather, “Ideals and Policy of the National Park Service,” 81; Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1924 *Annual Report*, 11-12; Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on the Public Lands, Construction of Roads, etc. in *National Parks and Monuments: Hearings Before the Committee on the Public Lands*. 68th Cong., 1st Sess., February 7, 8, 12, and 14, 1924; Rettie, *Our National Park System*, 250.

⁸⁷ See Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002). Sutter demonstrates that the wilderness ideal, as it took shape especially in the 1930s, was more a reaction to the effects of increased automotive recreation than the result of conflicts over natural resource exploitation: “The modern wilderness idea emerged as an alternative to landscapes of modernized leisure and play, and it was preeminently a product of the discordant internal politics of outdoor recreation” (p. 20).

south rim of the Grand Canyon, the policies of the new Park Service were at least in part to blame.⁸⁸ The subjects of how to define and preserve wilderness were widely discussed in the 1920s. By the end of the decade both the Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service responded to criticism and made attempts to be better stewards of the remaining inaccessible lands under their jurisdiction. The rapid pace of national and state park development in the 1930s exacerbated concerns about whether the Park Service could preserve wilderness while it developed parks. The initiation of the New Deal transformed the agency. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), in particular, undertook a tremendous amount of work in the national parks and developed dozens of state park systems. All of this CCC park work was under the direction of the Park Service, specifically of a young Conrad Wirth, who proved adept at rapidly organizing a large bureaucracy, as well as the delicate task of “cooperating” with state authorities while maintaining strict control over budgets and design standards.⁸⁹

One very powerful “purist” was Harold L. Ickes himself, the cantankerous Secretary of the Interior and public works spending tsar under Roosevelt. In the course of the 1930s, Ickes often chafed under Park Service policies he felt were perpetuated by Park Service officials in Washington, as well as the cadre of superintendents in the parks.⁹⁰ Ickes’s harshest conservation battles were fought over new parks brought into the system in the 1930s. He demanded a direct role in shaping development policies for the new “wilderness parks” (an unofficial designation), such as Everglades (Florida, 1934), Big Bend (Texas, 1935), Olympic (Washington, 1938), and Kings Canyon (California, 1940). For most historians, the first true “wilderness park” was Everglades National Park, because in this case the 1934 legislation was shaped by the wilderness debates of the time. The extraordinary bird populations of South Florida, and the bloody history of their exploitation and attempted protection, were bound to influence any

⁸⁸ See Carsten Lien, *Olympic Battleground: The Power Politics of Timber Preservation* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), 60-83; Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 135-159.

⁸⁹ James F. Kieley, “A Brief History of the National Park Service,” unpublished report (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, Main Interior Library, 1940), 23; Department of the Interior, *1940 Annual Report*, 203; Department of the Interior, *1941 Annual Report*, 203; Conrad L. Wirth, *The Civilian Conservation Corps Program of the United States Department of the Interior* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1944); Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 65-93. Also see Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: Government Printing Office, 1983); John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942* (Denver: Government Printing Office, 1985).

⁹⁰ Donald C. Swain, “The National Park Service and the New Deal,” *Pacific Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (August 1972): 312-32.

discussion of a national park in the area. The “river of grass” was an awesome landscape, but it lacked specific scenic features or dramatic tourist attractions typical of earlier national parks. The character of the landscape and its importance as habitat suggested that it become a different kind of park, one left in a “primitive” or “wilderness” condition. How exactly park planners would achieve this was a question that would be put off until the state of Florida finished the acquisitions of private land in 1947.⁹¹ As was the case with many of the wilderness parks of the Ickes years, the ultimate disposition and physical management of the Everglades would only be resolved—and debated—later, as part of the Mission 66 program.

The term “wilderness park,” which became a common if unofficial usage at the Park Service by the mid-1930s, defied precise definition. National parks had always been created “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as Thomas Vint often pointed out, and that mandate implied “improvements” which both enabled and controlled public access. But wilderness was defined in the 1930s as an area which would remain roadless forever, therefore limiting public access to those willing and able to undertake extended hiking or stock trips. While such backcountry users were dedicated preservationists, they were also a tiny minority of national park visitors. The need to resolve the potentially conflicting programs of the “wilderness park,” however, was postponed. World War II ended most park construction appropriations in 1942, and budgets continued to be limited between 1945 and 1955. Mission 66 funding, however, reawakened expectations for expanded visitor facilities in parks. At the same time, organized wilderness advocates of the postwar period pressed for greater preservation of wilderness, precisely by foregoing such development plans. The Mission 66 program never fully reconciled these competing ideas of national park management. It was during the postwar period that it first became a commonplace to refer to the paradox of making national parks available for public enjoyment, while at the same time preserving them as wilderness.

For Conrad Wirth and his recreational planners, however, increased capacity for public enjoyment could still be accommodated by the park system, as long as facilities were well designed and the system was appropriately expanded. While Ickes was promoting wilderness parks in the 1930s, Wirth and his army of CCC recruits were building entire categories of state and national parks that were unapologetically oriented

⁹¹ Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 371-376.

to recreational use.⁹² National recreation areas, for example, were planned and built through an interbureau agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation specifically to develop the potential of large reservoirs for boating, camping, and swimming. Lake Mead National Recreation Area (Nevada, 1936) behind Hoover Dam set the precedent for a national park area conceived almost entirely around the demand for access by recreationalists. National seashores were planned for areas that could also expect intense levels of recreational use. A 1935 Park Service survey identified at least twelve seashores to be added to the national park system in order to assure public access to the last great beaches still relatively unaffected by private ownership and resort construction. Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina was the first of its type when it was authorized in 1937; but again the state's acquisition of private land was not completed until after the war.⁹³ Both new types of recreational parks, national recreation areas and national seashores, would become signature parks of the Mission 66 era. Their origins, however, lay in the rich recreational planning legacy of the New Deal.

The roots of important postwar national historical parks also went back to projects that were planned or underway by the late 1930s. In 1933 Roosevelt transferred a host of Civil War battlefields and other historic sites to the jurisdiction of the Park Service, vastly expanding the agency's role as a curator of historic sites. In 1935 Congress passed the Historic Sites Act, authorizing the Park Service to undertake a national survey of historic sites and structures for possible addition to the national park system. The same year, a large portion of the St. Louis waterfront was designated a national historic site under the terms of the act, a first step in the creation of what would become the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. The Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Massachusetts and Hopewell Village in Pennsylvania were both designated in 1938. By that time, the Park Service was also involved in proposals for a national historical park centred around Independence Hall in downtown Philadelphia. In 1948 Congress passed legislation creating Independence National Historical Park, which would become the most significant of all Mission 66 era historical parks.

By 1940, the national park system had increased greatly in size, but even more so in complexity. That year Newton B. Drury (fig. 1) became the director of the Park

⁹² For the role of Franklin Roosevelt and Harold Ickes in 1930s wilderness protection efforts at Olympic and elsewhere, see Irving Brant, *Adventures in Conservation With Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Publishing Co., 1988).

⁹³ Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 55-56.

Service. Despite his personal and biographical closeness to Mather and Albright, many people believed Drury represented a very different philosophy from these earlier directors. His reputation as a preservationist was such that when David R. Brower (later executive director of the Sierra Club) heard of his appointment, he “wept for joy,” believing that it was “the beginning of a new era” in national park management.⁹⁴ But from the beginning of his time in Washington, the reality of managing the national park system clearly tempered Drury’s “purist” tendencies.

Drury proved to be a director well suited for the special conditions of wartime. In 1942, as park visitation plummeted, the agency was reduced to a skeleton staff both in parks and in regional offices. The Washington Office (including the director) was removed to Chicago to free up office space for more vital war purposes. Drury was kept busy, nevertheless, because his talents as a preservation advocate were soon badly needed. Timber, stock, and mining interests exploited patriotic sentiments and tried to force open national parks to commercial uses. Ickes and Drury were able to turn aside much of the attempted profiteering, with some exceptions. For Drury these were a familiar kind of preservation battle. His preservationist attitude, as well as an inherently conservative style, proved to be a combination well suited to the emotional debates of a nation at war.

When the war ended in 1945, however, he and his agency was immediately plunged into an increasingly unfamiliar world, in which the dynamics of Progressive Era controversies—such as “utilitarian” use of resources versus the preservation of “aesthetic” values—were swept away by a new generation of pressures and threats. In 1946 an already perplexed Drury reported that following the lifting of travel restrictions in August, “the floodgates of travel opened immediately. For months thereafter all previous monthly records for numbers of visitors were broken.”⁹⁵

Drury became acutely aware of what he would soon describe as the “dilemma of our parks,” which resulted from a number of postwar factors and trends. The end of the CCC in 1942, for example, meant that thousands of maintenance workers would not be returning to work, even after the postwar labour shortage abated. All the maintenance

⁹⁴ Richard H. Stroud, ed., *National Leaders of American Conservation* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 129-130; David R. Brower, *For Earth's Sake: The Life and Times of David Brower* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1990), 219-220; Mackintosh, “Harold L. Ickes,” 80; Department of the Interior Press Release, June 19, 1940, “Selection of Newton B. Drury for the Post of Director of the National Park Service...” (Personal Papers of Newton B. Drury, Entry 19, RG 79, National Archives).

⁹⁵ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1946 Annual Report*, 307-310.

work done by CCC recruits before the war could not possibly be accomplished by the much smaller number of regular Park Service employees returning from the war, who now also enjoyed a forty-hour work week, down from forty-eight before the war. New Deal spending programs, such as the PWA, had funded many park improvements, including roads, buildings, campgrounds, and museums. The CCC had not only provided construction labour, but often maintenance personnel for completed facilities.⁹⁶ In 1946 it was doubtful the conservative 80th Congress would continue to invest in parks, or even sustain the investments already made. Labour, housing, and construction materials were all in short supply, in any case, not only in the parks but nationally. At the same time, the “floodgates” had opened: after 1945 parks across the system began breaking their visitation records every year. Understaffed and underfunded, the parks nevertheless entered an era of unprecedented use, taking on an even more prominent place in the individual lives and collective imaginations of the American public. In the five years since Drury had taken on the job, the social, political, and economic realities of managing the national park system had changed forever.

In 1947 Drury observed that “never have the inadequacies of the development of the National Park System been so highlighted.” He estimated that \$110 million was needed for road modernizations, as was another \$120 million to complete the Blue Ridge and other parkway projects already underway. Another \$110 million would need to be invested directly by the government in concessioner facilities. Drury estimated that it would take an additional \$45 million dollars every year for seven years to address the situation. Despite Drury’s repeated calls for a “comprehensive program of development and improvement,” construction budgets during those years totalled less than a third even of his conservative proposal. In 1949 Drury estimated the development backlog at almost \$500 million; Congress appropriated a little more than \$14 million for park construction that year. Legislators were understandably preoccupied with the costs of the Cold War, the Korean War, and the reconstruction of Europe. Drury’s calls for multi-year construction authorizations—essentially the basis of Mission 66 seven years later—were ignored. While other domestic public works projects were funded, they reflected congressional priorities for housing, highways, and dam construction, which were spending categories the Truman administration perceived to be more direct forms of

⁹⁶ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1946 Annual Report*, 308.

economic stimulus.⁹⁷ Drury may have been a “purist,” but the only reason he did not initiate a major modernization of the parks himself was that he never got the funding he requested. Throughout his tenure as Park Service director, he made it clear that he believed that national parks were to be preserved for the enjoyment of the public, and that his agency had to assure that people had meaningful experiences of the parks even under increasingly difficult circumstances.

Despite Drury’s best efforts to describe the overwhelming conditions his park managers faced, he never managed to raise the concern for national parks above the other, admittedly dramatic events and issues of the day. In 1949 Drury published an article titled “The Dilemma of Our Parks,” in which he summarized many of his frustrations. Drury felt the parks were “still victims of the war...overcrowded and understaffed.” More funds were needed for their “protection and development,” two priorities he saw as mutually supportive, not in conflict. “Whether we like it or not,” he continued, the “enjoyment of ‘the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife’ in the national parks...is in large degree dependent on the ‘physical plant’ we provide.” Drury repeatedly argued for the “modernized and enlarged utilities” that were required for visitor safety and the protection of park landscapes and resources. Congress, he concluded, must increase appropriations, since New Deal spending had ended but public use had increased to unimagined levels.⁹⁸ These were essentially the arguments that would be made for Mission 66; but in the 1940s they went unheeded by both Congress and the Truman administration.

5.5 Hetch Hetchy

The controversy that ended Drury’s Park Service career, however, did not involve angry concessioners, unprecedented numbers of visitors, lack of staff, inadequate budgets, or the other elements of the “dilemma of our parks.” Drury’s return to California in 1951 (to run California’s state parks for the next eight years) was instead caused by one of the oldest types of threats to national parks: a dam building controversy. Dam construction was one aspect of the New Deal that Truman and postwar Democrats in Congress continued enthusiastically. Drury successfully turned aside most of the dam proposals

⁹⁷ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1947 Annual Report*, 327-328; idem, *1948 Annual Report*, 318; idem, *1949 Annual Report*, 302; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 455; Rettie, *Our National Park System*, 251.

⁹⁸ Newton B. Drury, “The Dilemma of Our Parks,” *American Forests* 55, no. 6 (June 1949): 6-11, 38, 39.

that would have affected national parks in the 1940s, but one project in particular became a source of controversy. The events and issues that swirled around this project led to Drury's departure from the Park Service, and helped shape the immediate political context for the planning and initiation of Mission 66.

The Bureau of Reclamation's massive Colorado River Storage Project, a system of dams in the upper Colorado watershed, had at its centre a large reservoir in Echo Park, a particularly scenic area of Dinosaur National Monument. Although Dinosaur was technically a monument and not a park, and although most park and wilderness advocates had never visited this remote region on the Utah-Colorado border at the confluence of the Green and the Yampa rivers, the incursion of a dam into a unit of the national park system could not be allowed if the integrity of system as a whole was to be protected. Several recent histories establish that the struggle over the proposed Echo Park dam influenced and even instigated the postwar environmental movement. Wilderness advocates, non-profit outdoors clubs, scientists, magazine editors, and a broad range of other concerned individuals all rallied around the threatened Echo Park, and in the process they permanently changed the politics of preservation.⁹⁹

The relationship of the Park Service to this nascent environmental movement was troubled from the outset. In this case the trouble began by 1941, when a Colorado River Basin study by Conrad Wirth and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., had first been authorized through an interbureau agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (a sister agency in the Department of the Interior responsible for building dams). When the study was finished in 1946, the authors recommended against transforming Echo Park into a reservoir and recreation area, stating the plans would "deplorably alter...the wilderness qualities" of Dinosaur National Monument. They noted that the first duty of the Park Service was to make "the protection of the natural and archaeological values of the area the controlling factors in administering it." But the report also allowed that the dam could be justified if it were "clearly shown...that it would be of greater benefit to the whole nation to develop the area for water storage and power than to retain it in a natural state," at least leaving a door open for future debate likely to occur in Congress. They also suggested that if the

⁹⁹ See Elmo Richardson, *Dams, Parks, and Politics: Resource Development and Preservation in the Truman-Eisenhower Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973); Clayton R. Koppes, "Environmental Policy and American Liberalism: The Department of the Interior, 1933-1953," *Environmental Review* 7 (Spring 1983): 17-53; Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Jon M. Cosco, *Echo Park: Struggle for Preservation* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Books, 1995).

wilderness character of the monument would suffer on the one hand, “on the other hand...[the dam] would undoubtedly produce other recreational opportunities.”¹⁰⁰

The idea of accepting the construction of the dam (and effectively redesignating Dinosaur National Monument as a national recreation area) had been at least discussed by Park Service officials in the 1930s, leading Bureau of Reclamation engineers to develop surveys and plans during the 1940s under an assumption that the Park Service could be made to go along with their plans.¹⁰¹ As partners in the planning for recreational land uses in the Colorado River Basin, Drury and Wirth had allowed the investigations for the Echo Park project to proceed. This proved to be a tactical error. During the postwar period attitudes among wilderness advocates hardened against the dam, and the Park Service scrambled to revise its own stand on the issue. Drury and Wirth spoke out repeatedly against the dam in the late 1940s, but the plans had been allowed to go too far and the project had built up strong political support. In 1950 Truman and Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman officially endorsed it. Drury was in a position not of shaping Park Service policy, but of attempting to deal with the consequences of decisions made higher up in the Department of the Interior. In this case, the resulting friction with Secretary Chapman led to his resignation in 1951.¹⁰²

The Echo Park dam proposal ultimately failed, but when it did it was because of the opposition of the public and of private non-profit environmental groups—the National Parks Association, the Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society—not that of the Park Service. Drury’s opposition to the Echo Park dam came too late and meant too little to the activists on the front lines. Wilderness advocates learned to do without the Park Service in the Echo Park fight. The lesson carried over to their struggle for federal wilderness legislation, which the Park Service also did not support. The Echo Park dam was defeated in 1956, the same year many of the same coalition of preservation groups introduced the first “wilderness bill” in Congress, later to become the 1964 Wilderness Act. It was also the same year that Conrad Wirth launched Mission 66, a radically

¹⁰⁰ Conrad L. Wirth and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., *A Survey of the Recreational Resources of the Colorado River Basin* [1946] (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 199. Apparently the 1941 interagency memorandum that authorized the study specifically allowed for the consideration of a new reservoir and recreation area in Dinosaur National Monument. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, 31-32.

¹⁰¹ See Susan Rhoades Neel, “Irreconcilable Differences: Reclamation, Preservation, and the Origins of the Echo Park Controversy,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1990.

¹⁰² Although the exact circumstances of Drury’s departure are not fully known, most historians have concluded that his continued opposition to the Echo Park dam after 1950 was a deciding factor. Neel, “Irreconcilable Differences,” 488-493; Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, 31-35, 100-104; Cosco, *Echo Park*, 42-53.

different response to the postwar pressures on public lands. Non-profit environmental groups and the Park Service both launched eras of increased strength and great expansion in 1956. They were, however, headed on very different courses.

Newton Drury was the first Park Service director to encounter the complex postwar issues that to some degree have occupied park managers ever since. The vastly increased use of the park system, for example, and the reduced influence and function of the Park Service within the federal bureaucracy both continued to challenge Drury's successors. Negotiations to renew concessioner contracts and secure new private investment for concession improvements became ever more difficult. Wilderness advocates and early environmentalists, while supportive of the general goals of the Park Service, often differed on key assumptions about the purposes of preservation, and therefore on specific policies for managing parks. The postwar social and demographic trends that precipitated many of these issues—such as population growth, automobile ownership, and low density urbanization—only intensified in the 1950s. After Drury's departure for California in 1951, the "dilemma of our parks" he described did not dissipate, but grew more ominous and intractable. This was the backdrop against which Conrad Wirth would organize and conduct Mission 66.

Chapter 6: Conrad Wirth and Postwar “Recreational Planning”

6.1 Conrad Wirth

In April 1951, Secretary of the Interior Chapman appointed Arthur E. Demaray, a long time Park Service employee now near retirement, director of the National Park Service (fig. 2). Demaray’s appointment recognized his contributions as an assistant to every director since Stephen Mather. The choice also allowed Chapman to minimize the controversy caused by Newton Drury’s departure. Opponents of the Echo Park dam seized upon Drury’s resignation as an indication that Chapman was forcing the Park Service further into recreational development at the expense of its mandate to protect inviolate wilderness.¹⁰³ By abetting the transformation of Dinosaur National Monument into a national recreation area (or its equivalent), the Park Service would be allowing a pristine wilderness under its care to be destroyed by dam construction. Chapman probably already had Conrad Wirth in mind as Drury’s replacement; but replacing Drury directly with Wirth—who was in charge of recreational planning—would have been a further incitement to opponents of the Echo Park dam. In any case, Demaray retired that December, and Chapman then replaced him with Wirth as the sixth director of the National Park Service.

But if Chapman or any one else thought Wirth would be amenable to the sacrifice of Dinosaur, they misconstrued not only Wirth’s position on the Echo Park controversy, but his entire background and philosophy of park planning. Conrad Louis Wirth, known as “Connie” by his colleagues, was another Park Service stalwart. He had been hired by Horace Albright in 1931 and spent his early career working in the Washington office, which then consisted of about twenty-five employees, including many “Mather men,” such as Albright, Thomas Vint, Arno Cammerer, and Arthur Demaray. Wirth also knew many leading park planners and advocates through his father Theodore, who was a well known figure in the American park movement. Theodore Wirth was born in Switzerland in 1863 and emigrated to the United States in his twenties after studying landscape design and horticulture in Paris and London. In the 1880s he worked for Calvert Vaux as a gardener and arbourist in Central Park, and later was supervisor of Riverside Park, also in

¹⁰³ Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, 104-105; Foresta, *America’s National Parks*, 52.

New York. In 1894, he moved to Frederick Law Olmsted's hometown, Hartford, Connecticut, to run the municipal parks department there. He established his reputation as the "dean" of American park superintendents, however, in Minneapolis, where he oversaw the management and expansion of the municipal park system from 1906 to 1935. Minneapolis was favoured with a remarkable park system begun in the 1880s under the landscape architect Horace W. S. Cleveland, who died in 1900. For almost thirty years, Theodore Wirth oversaw the realization of what remains today one of the finest park systems in the country. Conrad Wirth, who was born in the superintendent's residence in Hartford's Elizabeth Park in 1899, grew up in the superintendent's residence in Lyndale Park, Minneapolis.¹⁰⁴

As an adolescent, Wirth attended military school in Wisconsin. From there he went on to study landscape architecture with his "father's choice of teachers," Frank A. Waugh, a landscape architect from Wisconsin who had established a landscape degree program at the Massachusetts Agricultural College (later the University of Massachusetts, Amherst) in 1903. Wirth was a below average student, but continued a strong interest in sports and other extracurricular activities he had developed in military school. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture in 1923 and moved to San Francisco, where he went to work for nurseryman Donald McLaren, the son of John McLaren, the Scottish designer of Golden Gate Park and another close friend of his father. After two years of this apprenticeship, Wirth moved to New Orleans and started his own landscape architecture firm with a partner. The new business did well at first, mainly through the design of subdivisions for land developers; but the development boom soon turned to bust on the Gulf Coast and elsewhere, and by 1927 Wirth was out of business. At that point, he again relied on his father's connections and moved to Washington, DC, where Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., secured him a job with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1928. In 1931 Horace Albright offered him a transfer to the National Park Service's Washington office, where Wirth became assistant director in charge of the Branch of Lands, or "chief land planner," in 1931.¹⁰⁵

Wirth remained in the Park Service Washington office for the next thirty-three years, finally running the agency from 1951 until 1964, the longest of any director before

¹⁰⁴ Theodore Wirth, *Minneapolis Park System, 1883-1944* (Minneapolis: Board of Park Commissioners, City of Minneapolis, 1945); James H. Husted, "Park Family...In Three Generations of Wirths," *Park Maintenance* (January 1952): 5-7; "Conrad Louis Wirth, Former NPS Director, Dies at 93," *National Park Service Courier* (Summer 1993): 22-23; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 4-10.

¹⁰⁵ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 11-15.

or since. But it was his first decade in Washington that shaped many of his future attitudes and policy decisions. Wirth was only one of what would soon be hundreds of landscape architects idled by the Depression who would come to work with the Park Service. The transformation of the agency began in the spring of 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt introduced his idea for the mobilization of a “peacetime army.” Roosevelt conceived of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to conserve the human and natural resources of the nation, at a time when unemployment among young men, and natural disasters such as the Dust Bowl, seemed to imperil both. The CCC was quickly organized with the War Department, the Department of Labour, and other agencies all taking part and sharing the enormous costs. The conservation work itself was to be directed in national forests by the U.S. Forest Service, and in national, state, and some county and municipal parks by the National Park Service.

In his position as chief land planner, Wirth had been in charge of investigating possible additions to the national park system for the previous two years. He now became the principal liaison to dozens of state governments, many of which had virtually no state parks, but which were rapidly acquiring land (at Depression prices) in order to take advantage of the federal government’s offer to develop them with CCC labour and funds. With the assistance of Herbert Evison, formerly the executive director of the National Conference on State Parks, Wirth oversaw and reviewed all planning, design, and construction undertaken by the Park Service CCC state park program with the “cooperating” local park agencies. Wirth maintained strong, centralized control over the quality and design standards of the park developments rapidly undertaken all over country. Park designers and construction superintendents—whether they were working for local agencies, the CCC, or directly for the Park Service—had their work reviewed by travelling Park Service inspectors, and ultimately by Wirth himself in Washington. Local agencies that did not meet the standards set by Wirth risked not having CCC camps and associated funding assigned to them. Hundreds of architects, engineers, and landscape architects worked in state park CCC camps as designers, supervisors, and foremen. By 1941 over 560 state, county, and municipal parks had been created or redeveloped by Wirth’s program, in partnership with over 140 state and local park agencies.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ And all this was in addition to the other CCC work being done in the national parks themselves. See Kieley, *A Brief History of the National Park Service*; Wirth, *The Civilian Conservation Corps Program of the United States Department of the Interior*; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 65-93; Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*.

The New Deal catapulted the Park Service into a national recreational planning and park development agency, one that was to a considerable degree run by Conrad Wirth. The rapid expansion of budgets and activities required a regionalization of the agency. By 1935 there were eight state park “regions” within the Park Service, headed by regional directors who were mostly former state park officials.¹⁰⁷ In 1936 Arno Cammerer consolidated his agency’s CCC programs, bringing together Wirth’s state park program and the national park CCC camps all under Wirth’s control. That year Congress also passed the Park, Parkway, and Recreation-Area Study Act (drafted under Wirth’s direction) which expanded and legitimized the Park Service’s role in national recreational planning in cooperation with state agencies. The act also authorized the Park Service to assemble a national plan for the recreational use of public lands in every state, using CCC funds and labour. This project culminated in 1941, when Wirth published *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*, the first national plan for the recreational uses of public lands.¹⁰⁸ By 1940, when Newton Drury arrived in Washington, Wirth had demonstrated remarkable ability as a bureaucrat and a chief executive. To a considerable degree, he had personally transformed the Park Service into a regionalized, national planning agency, working with government partners in every state to coordinate the recreational use of federal and state lands. There had never been such a recreational land use planning organization before in the United States; neither has there been one since. By 1942 Wirth was a seasoned and effective bureaucrat, with a personal reputation for strong leadership, political savvy, and an ability to impart idealism and enthusiasm among his agency’s employees.

In the meantime, Thomas Vint, who was only five years older than Wirth and had been the Chief Landscape Architect of the Park Service since 1927, remained the agency’s overall chief of planning and design (fig. 3). Vint remained more involved in landscape and architectural design, which had always been his strengths, rather than administration. Nevertheless in 1933 he moved from San Francisco to Washington to head up a centralized Branch of Plans and Designs that oversaw the Depression-era work being done in the national parks themselves. Vint’s former San Francisco “field office” became the “western division” of his design branch, under the supervision of his assistant,

¹⁰⁷ In 1936 the number of CCC state park regions was reduced back to four. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 127, 130-131; Paige, *The CCC and the National Park Service*, 48-51; Unrau and Williss, *Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, 252.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service, *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941).

landscape architect William G. ("Bill") Carnes. An "eastern division" was headed by another close friend of Vint's, architect Charles E. Peterson, who moved from Philadelphia to Washington.¹⁰⁹

For those concerned that the Park Service was abandoning its mandate to preserve wilderness in favour of increased national park development (as well as the design of state parks, national seashores, and national recreation areas) the regionalization, expansion, and diversification of the bureaucracy in the mid-1930s were ominous signs. It was at this time that the National Parks Association, together with the newly organized Wilderness Society and other groups, proposed the creation of the "National Primeval Park System," made up of the larger, western parks that they feared would be overdeveloped as a result of the CCC program and the Park Service's bureaucratic transformation. The controversy that might have resulted from New Deal park development, however, was cut short by American entry into World War II. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Congress rapidly terminated the "emergency spending" measures that had been the basis of public works and conservation programs. Debates over the stewardship of park wilderness and the limits of recreational development would only be rekindled in earnest when Congress once again approved major national park appropriations, almost fifteen years later, under the banner of Mission 66.

6.2 Recreational Planning

In 1950, after Truman and Oscar Chapman endorsed the Echo Park dam, Drury decided it would be better to lose his job rather than preside over what promised to be largest violation of the national park system since 1913. But under the circumstances, it was even more imperative for Conrad Wirth to find a way to oppose the dam as vigorously as he possibly could. After all, he had overseen the plans for dozens of recreation areas around new reservoirs going back to the 1930s, and especially since 1941. The activists now fighting the Bureau of Reclamation's plans for Dinosaur could have easily perceived him as a collaborator, who had undermined his own agency's duty to protect the integrity of the national park system. If for no other reason, Wirth's astute political sensibilities would have led him to oppose the Echo Park proposal. There were other more personal reasons to demonstrate his opposition, as well. Wirth needed to

¹⁰⁹ See Thomas C. Vint and J. R. Thrower, eds., *Report on the Building Program from Allotments of the Public Works Administration, Eastern Division, 1933-1937* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, n.d. [1937]), 1; Unrau and Williss, *Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, 249.

show that he understood the difference between appropriate recreational development, and development that was out of place—in fact “deplorable”—when it inappropriately altered the character of a scenic or wilderness area. Wirth’s entire philosophy of recreational planning depended on the ability to make such distinctions. He had summarized his methodology as early as 1935, when his state park CCC operations (and criticism of them) were beginning to reach a peak. Parks should be considered in two categories, Wirth suggested, “conservation” and “recreation.” The two types of parks might be separate or linked, or “one might even completely surround the other, forming a multiple-use area”; but the two types of landscape needed to be separate and distinct, since inappropriate recreational development would destroy the value of an area set aside for conservation. To know where recreational developments were needed and appropriate, extensive statistical, demographic, and natural resource information (of the type that filled his river basin plans) needed to be gathered, analyzed, and used as the basis for informed decisions.¹¹⁰

Since the mid-1930s, wilderness advocates had attacked Wirth’s recreational planning as no more than “overdevelopment,” or indiscriminate destruction of the pristine character of scenic areas. They insisted that the Park Service could not both develop recreation areas and be an adequate steward of wilderness. If Wirth were to abet in the destruction of Echo Park, it would be impossible to refute such claims. The credibility of his entire approach to park planning and management was at stake. Since the publication of his and Olmsted’s 1946 report on the Colorado River Basin, Wirth had maintained that Dinosaur National Monument was not appropriate for development as a recreation area. When he became Park Service director in December 1951, he continued to be an outspoken opponent of the dam, in numerous published articles and at public meetings. He did not shrink from travelling to Vernal, Utah, and to other communities in the area that fiercely supported the dam and were outraged at his opposition. The new director was criticized in Utah and by the project’s backers in Congress; but he was not fired. In fact, Secretary Chapman was already reconsidering his 1950 decision to support the dam, in part because of the strong negative response it had generated from an increasingly broad coalition. Wirth’s opposition to the dam was longstanding and the result of deeply held convictions, but his timing was also fortuitous. As the newly appointed Park Service

¹¹⁰ Conrad L. Wirth, “Parks and Their Uses,” in *American Planning and Civic Annual*, Harlean James, ed. (Washington, DC: American Civic and Planning Association, 1935), 156-161.

director, he was able to reinforce his credibility with conservation groups at a critical moment, without suffering consequences at the Department of the Interior.¹¹¹

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., was another influential opponent of the Echo Park dam proposal, perhaps for some of the same reasons: the 1946 report he and Wirth wrote could be seen as one source of the problem. But Olmsted's credentials as a scenic preservationist were impressively unique. Born in 1870, the younger Olmsted had grown up in his famous father's office and home in Brookline, Massachusetts, and had participated in major landscape design and park planning projects at an early age. He had been an influential opponent of the Hetch Hetchy reservoir proposal in 1913, citing his father's 1865 plan for Yosemite Valley in defence of the irreplaceable value of such scenery. At the 1950 congressional hearings on the fate of Echo Park, he condemned the dam project, and was one of only two opponents testifying who had actually visited the remote site (which he had done twice in the 1940s while in his seventies) and could speak with authority on the superlative character of the scenery.¹¹² The relationship between Olmsted and Wirth was clearly important to both. Wirth owed his career to the elder landscape architect, and like Thomas Vint and others at the Park Service, often looked to him as a direct link to Olmstedian tradition, and as an unimpeachable authority on park management. For his part, Olmsted had a profound interest in the Park Service, going back to 1916 when he had drafted the key portions of the legislation that created the agency. Through his work as a frequent consultant, as a member of the Yosemite Board of Expert Advisors, and as a mentor to both Vint and Wirth, he continued to influence the practice of Park Service landscape architecture and park planning until his death in 1957.¹¹³

When Wirth's father, Theodore, died in 1949, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., wrote a letter of condolence that Wirth later felt best expressed the philosophy of park making to which he had dedicated himself and his agency. Both of their fathers, Olmsted began, shared "a deep-seated, constant and compelling interest in and sympathy with, the *people* using the parks." Park work involved understanding how people derived pleasure from a particular park, and in "guiding them by every available means to get the best values from their use of it." Without this interest for and in "the *people* who use the parks," and how

¹¹¹ See "Director Wirth on Park Policy," *National Parks Magazine* 26, no. 110 (July-September, 1952): 101-134; Conrad L. Wirth, "The Aims of the National Park Service in Relation to Water Resources," 1; Cosco, *Echo Park*, 49-51.

¹¹² Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, 81-84.

¹¹³ See Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 68-72.

they could be “induced to use them with greater benefit to themselves,” park management was an “academic and sterile” exercise. This was the most important idea, Olmsted concluded, to be learned from “your father’s life work, and that of my father.”¹¹⁴

Olmsted’s letter of condolence and encouragement to his accomplished young protégé was written at a time when the Echo Park controversy was reaching a crucial point. The letter emphasized that parks were set aside and preserved for a purpose: to allow public enjoyment without allowing any use that would compromise scenery or wildlife. At Echo Park they were faced with a classic “impairment” of a national park (to quote Olmsted’s contribution to the 1916 Park Service legislation): a vast reservoir that would destroy the dramatic landscape of desert canyons and unusual geologic features. While a recreation area could be developed around such a reservoir, by far the more appropriate alternative for a unit of the national park system would be to leave the park in its “natural condition” by devising a “master plan” for public use. Such park development might include carefully sited roads, trails, campgrounds, administrative facilities, and possibly overnight accommodations; but it would not necessarily constitute an impairment if the facilities were properly designed and limited to specific areas. In fact, development as a park would be the best assurance that any proposals for true impairments (private residential or resort development, dam construction, mining, logging, or grazing, for example) would be condemned by the public, and therefore by Congress. Park development could preserve places “unimpaired,” in other words, “for the people.”

This overall philosophy of what constituted an “impairment” of a park landscape and what it meant to “preserve” landscapes for “public enjoyment” can be characterized as Olmstedian theory. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., reiterated this ideology of public park making which was first described by his father in his 1865 recommendations for Yosemite Valley. This was the professional theory that guided Conrad Wirth throughout his career, including his tenure as Park Service director. But neither Olmsted nor Wirth recognized at the time that extractive industries and dam construction—Echo Park notwithstanding—would not continue to be considered the primary threats of impairment to national parks in the context of postwar American society. Because as the numbers of

¹¹⁴ Emphasis in the original. A transcript of Olmsted’s letter is in Conrad Wirth’s personal papers at the University of Wyoming (American Heritage Center, Conrad L. Wirth Collection) and is reprinted in part in Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and People*, 21-22, as well as in several articles authored by Wirth beginning in the mid-1950s.

visitors to national parks continued to climb, the presence of the public would itself increasingly be perceived as a devastating form of impairment. As the public use of parks came to be considered one of the greatest threats to them, the idea of preservation for the sake of public enjoyment became, for many, a sinister paradox. The theoretical basis of the American park movement was shifting in the 1950s. The results of this change were evident by the early 1960s, as a new generation of advocates and politicians ushered in an era of “new conservation” and legislation such as the 1964 Wilderness Act and the 1966 Historic Preservation Act. If this change had been underway to some degree since the 1920s, its most dramatic moments coincided, and often conflicted, with the implementation of Conrad Wirth’s Mission 66 program.

6.3 Landscape Change in the Mid-Twentieth Century

To understand either the influence of what would soon be described as the “environmental movement” on the one hand, and the contrasting philosophical basis of the Mission 66 program and postwar national recreational planning on the other, both must be seen in the context of the dramatic changes occurring in the American landscape and society at the time. Between 1940 and 1960, the country grew from 132 million to 180 million people, with virtually the entire increase in cities and especially postwar “suburbs.” Growth was particularly evident in California and the other ten western states, where the total population doubled from 14 million to 28 million. During the same period, individual average annual earnings rose nationally from \$1,300 to \$4,700. A larger, more affluent, and more urban population indulged an unrelenting appetite for outdoor recreation and new automobiles, often in combination. Americans spent almost \$4 billion dollars on recreation in 1940, but over \$14 billion in 1955; passenger car registrations rose from 27 million to 52 million during the same years.¹¹⁵ Leisure time steadily increased and the five-day work week became standard, while the proportion of income spent on housing and other necessities decreased from 33% in 1947 to 23% in 1967.¹¹⁶ As the opportunities for discretionary travel and recreation increased even beyond the growth in population, enormous new pressures on any areas that could be used for vacation or resort purposes—rural scenic areas, mountains, beaches, lakes, and

¹¹⁵ George Thomas Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790-2000: America Year by Year* (Lanham, Maryland: Bernan Press, 1994), 17, 79, 111-112, 267.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *200 Million Americans* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 51.

rivers—were inevitable. The demographic trends of the postwar period would have meant great change for the national park system whether the Mission 66 program had been put forward or not.

The fate of the national parks, as public parks, was linked to the size, character, and habits of the public that used them and (hopefully) supported congressional policies and budgets that kept them viable. But the parks also formed an integral part of a larger and distinctly modern American landscape that was, as a whole, also changing rapidly. Again, national parks could not have escaped change during this period, as sprawling urbanization and the Interstate Highway system, for example, produced entire new geographical contexts for them. Better roads, faster cars, and growing cities in the Southwest, the Rocky Mountains, and on the West Coast made many western national parks almost as easy to reach as eastern parks; postwar patterns of urbanization and transportation made the entire national park system far more accessible than it had ever been. National park development constituted a part—as did tracts of residential development, shopping centres, and highway construction—of an overall, modern landscape that was beginning to reach its ultimate development across the entire continent during the postwar decades. In this sense, the history of the modernization of national park landscapes must be seen in the context of the modernization of the American landscape generally, including contemporary trends in housing subdivisions, commercial and corporate “centres,” and Interstate Highway engineering.

Several recent histories analyze the most salient aspect of postwar American landscape history: the “suburbanization” of the nation.¹¹⁷ The vast expansion of cities during this period assumed low density patterns that quickly took them into surrounding towns, counties, and unincorporated areas. Ubiquitous, sometimes vast subdivisions of detached, single-family “tract housing” covered entire regions. The resulting communities were politically and physically decentralized, and they perplexed planners, who coined neologisms—conurbation, megalopolis, sprawl, metro city—for this expanded form of the American metropolis. Low density patterns of urbanization were hardly new in the United States, but the postwar “suburb” reached an entirely new scale.

¹¹⁷ See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Peter G. Rowe, *Making a Middle Landscape* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991); David L. Ames and Linda McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places, National Register Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002).

Housing demand had built up during the years of the Depression and World War II, and returning veterans and their families created an insatiable market. Builders responded, and the great majority of the new houses built were outside the political limits of major cities, from New York to San Francisco, two cities that (like most) actually lost population between 1950 and 1960, while their “standard metropolitan statistical areas” (or SMSA, another new coinage) gained 12% and 24% respectively.¹¹⁸

The historic postwar housing boom was fuelled by the intense postwar housing shortage. Twenty years of low housing production, 15 million returning veterans, and an increase in marriage and birth rates resulted in many families “doubled up” in houses or apartments, or living with relatives. For those who remained in the military (now a much larger peacetime force than before the war) finding housing could be as difficult as it was for other returning veterans. In 1949 *Life* magazine documented “scandalous” substandard and overcrowded living conditions for families on military bases. That year Congress acted with unprecedented legislation that created a partnership with private industry to build housing on or around military bases all over the country. Under the terms of the 1949 Wherry Act, private developers built housing on land leased to them by the government and then managed the properties and rented them to military personnel. The government was to acquire ownership of the houses through amortization, but they were bought out ahead of schedule in 1955 and thereafter managed directly by the military. The Wherry program was also replaced in 1955 under the Capehart Act, in which developers again built housing financed by the FHA, but with the government assuming ownership and management responsibilities directly. During the 1950s, these programs made the military a major force in the housing industry: between 1949 and 1964 nearly 250,000 units of housing were built under the two acts. With FHA standards (but no single set of standardized plans) in place, private developers produced communities, that like other subdivisions of the period, were intensely uniform and self contained, set off from surrounding neighbourhoods, and characterized by curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs, front and back yards, attached garages, and generally low profile buildings. Multiple dwellings of up to eight units were built in addition to far more numerous single-family houses. Although they were comparable to the contemporary housing tracts many of the same builders produced elsewhere, due to their special situation as rental housing associated with military bases, the Cape and Wherry

¹¹⁸ House & Home, *Housing Facts and Trends* (New York: McGraw Hill/Dodge Publication, 1965), 21.

neighbourhoods have changed less than many other tract developments of the 1950s and today retain much of their original, homogeneous character.¹¹⁹

A shortage of staff housing figured prominently in the postwar “crisis” in the national parks, as well. As Mission 66 got underway, Congress proved willing to make direct appropriations for park housing (as it did for military housing as well, after the Capehart program ended), and Conrad Wirth finally was able to address the longstanding dearth of housing for park staff and their families. The design and construction of Mission 66 houses in national parks would be determined—much as it had for the military—by federal requirements, and by the capabilities and economics of the postwar building industry itself. Not surprisingly, Park Service architects turned to standard plans for two and three-bedroom ranch houses, built with materials and construction technology readily available to local builders. The combination of standard plans, flexibility in materials, and use of streamlined construction techniques (such as prefabricated components) were absolutely necessary if national park housing was to be built within a set cost per unit, as Congress required. The Park Service adopted the ranch house for many of the same reasons it had earlier used the bungalow type: it represented an achievable and efficient standard for housing, and it embodied what many future occupants were likely to perceive as a desirable image and floor plan for the conduct of modern family life. But while the bungalow of the 1920s fit in with the rustic imagery of Thomas Vint’s master plans, the Mission 66 ranch house of the 1950s announced a new approach to park planning intended to respond to the changing social and geographic contexts of the parks.

Other aspects of postwar “suburbanization” affected Mission 66 and national recreational planning and design as much as the proliferation of tract subdivisions and changes in the residential construction industry. As people abandoned older cities for new communities on the urban periphery, they did not leave the city behind as much as they brought it with them. While earlier suburbs had been residential enclaves populated

¹¹⁹ Congressional Quarterly Service, *Housing a Nation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 21; Chester Hartman and Robin Drayer, “Military-Family Housing: The Other Public Housing Program,” *Housing and Society* 17, no. 3 (1990): 67-78; William C. Baldwin, “Wherry and Capehart: Army Family Housing Privatization programs in the 1950s,” *Engineer* (April 1996): 42-44. Such a large amount of housing produced in a short period has resulted in management concerns as the properties all approach fifty years of age at once. The U.S. Army has determined that the existing 58,000 units of Cape and Wherry housing built on or near its bases should be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. See R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., *Neighbourhood Design Guidelines for Army Wherry and Capehart Era Family Housing*. Draft, government report (U.S. Army: Fort Detrick, Maryland, 2002).

mainly by a professional or business class that commuted to a central city, postwar patterns of urbanization dispersed not only residential neighbourhoods, but entire industries, corporate headquarters, and vast retail complexes. The result was not an enclave from the city but an extension of it: postwar “suburbs” included places to live, work, shop, and enjoy leisure activities—the components of a city—set in urbanized landscapes that covered entire regions.

As migrating Americans turned their cities inside out, one of the first requirements for their new way of life was the establishment of retail and commercial centres that could serve a dispersed population. By the early 1950s, planners and developers were building hundreds of what the architect Victor Gruen called “the new building type...shopping centres.”¹²⁰ While a few early examples of suburban retail complexes had been built since the 1920s (and even earlier), in 1950 there were still only around 100 mostly small shopping centres in the United States. But as retailers followed their customers out to their new tract house communities, over 7,500 shopping centres were built between 1950 and 1965. During that time, shopping centres diversified and grew from neighbourhood centres anchored by a single supermarket, to regional centres with dozens of stores. The proliferation of shopping centres resulted, again, in part because of FHA guidelines, which in this case required shopping centres for some larger subdivisions. But retailers and builders did not need the federal government to explain the potential of this merchandising phenomenon. Coordinated groups of businesses located on the urbanizing edges of cities—if designed with easy automotive access and large parking lots—quickly made dramatic profits for their backers. The success of early examples (such as the Broadway-Crenshaw Centre in Los Angeles, Northgate near Seattle, Northland outside Detroit, or Shoppers World in the Boston area) rapidly brought the attention of developers and investors eager to participate in what became a bonanza of profitable construction and retailing.¹²¹

The dramatic commercial success of shopping centres and the decision by many corporations to relocate to the outer city significantly influenced American architectural and landscape design in the 1950s. Planners, designers, and others in the construction business were inevitably drawn to where so much new development was occurring: the

¹²⁰ Victor Gruen and Lawrence P. Smith, “Shopping Centres: The New Building Type,” *Progressive Architecture* (June 1952): 66-109.

¹²¹ Nancy E. Cohen, *America's Marketplace: A History of Shopping Centres* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc., 2002), 28, 52, 55.

“suburban” edges of metropolitan areas. New commissions, programs, and clients, as well as new construction materials, techniques, and economics all were bound to change American architectural and landscape design. At the National Park Service, professional staff could not ignore these trends and remain effective, or even competent; like any other design office, they worked within the social, economic, and technical contexts of their day. The proliferation of the automobile, the expansion of “suburban” cities, and the availability of labour saving construction technology all affected proposed development in national parks as much as construction anywhere else. Mission 66 needed to be planned within the parameters of what would be possible and affordable working with available architectural consultants and construction contractors, as well as what would be affordable and acceptable in the eyes of Congress and the public. It could hardly be surprising that the centrepiece of Mission 66 would be a major new type of park facility: a large, centralized building, modernist in its architectural inspiration, with easy highway access, generous parking, and “one-stop” convenience. The new idea had many names at first, reflecting its complex, unified program; but in 1956, Conrad Wirth personally insisted on the description he felt captured its essential purpose, and it became known as the “visitor center.”¹²²

6.4 Postwar Federal Highways

No element of the postwar landscape more directly indicated the connections between national parks and the rest of the rapidly modernizing American landscape than the development of automotive highways. No aspect of the postwar landscape more directly influenced the condition and fate of national parks, or the priorities and structure of Conrad Wirth’s Mission 66 program. Parks and roads, together, already had a long and intertwined history of federal policy and funding, as noted earlier. Throughout the twentieth century, the federal government developed both highways and parks in tandem, as the two principal components of a modern, national public landscape. Just as the Park Service was created in 1916 to oversee the redevelopment of the parks for automotive tourism, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) was established in 1918 (through a reorganization of the old Office of Public Roads), and subsequently set the engineering standards and most of the policy for how the federal-aid highway program was implemented. By the mid-1930s the New Deal had poured hundreds of millions of

¹²² Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 17-18.

dollars into highway construction and the BPR, in partnership with state highway agencies, had overseen the construction of a numbered system of “primary” roads across the country. These were the roads that brought unprecedented millions of automotive tourists to the newly expanded and redeveloped national park system.

But the BPR also began to encounter criticism, much as did the Park Service at about this time. In the case of the nation’s highways, however, some critics felt the BPR had done too little, not too much, to accommodate the automobile. The increased speed and number of automobiles on the road were already making even the federal-aid system obsolete. Two-lane highways engineered for thirty miles per hour, without limited access (meaning that cars could enter and exit at many curb cuts along the road) were unsafe for larger numbers of heavier vehicles that could travel at fifty to seventy miles per hour. In urban areas, the national system had done little to ameliorate traffic congestion, which was chronic and worsening almost everywhere as car and truck registrations continued to increase. By the late 1930s, many planners and elected officials favoured a range of dramatic proposals for urban expressways and interstate toll roads that effectively bypassed the BPR.

Several states began their own plans for toll financed superhighways, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (first section opened 1940) being the first, and the New York State Thruway (first section opened 1948) the most ambitious.¹²³ The popularity and economic success of the first turnpikes and throughways suggested that a national system of such roads would be heavily used, as well. In 1944 Congress held hearings which historian Bruce Seely calls “the most comprehensive discussion on roads in this country to that date.”¹²⁴ The result was the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944, which authorized the construction of a 40,000-mile “national system of interstate highways” to be financed half by the federal government and half by the states. The proposed locations of the interstate system were described by 1947, and other significant federal highway appropriations were made in the following years. But the exact means of funding and constructing a new superhighway system remained elusive, and little progress was made.

In the meantime, phenomenal numbers of new cars and trucks were being put on the road. By the late 1940s American highways—like American national parks—were generally perceived as critically overcrowded and in need of dramatic expansion and improvement. Highways and parks were overcrowded for the same reasons: more

¹²³ Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 141-149.

Americans than ever could afford to buy cars and did, and more Americans also chose to live in a manner that made the use of automobiles essential for daily living. By 1955 over 60 million motor vehicles were registered in the United States, double the number that had been in 1945.¹²⁵ But the capacity of the nation's roads (including national park roads) had not doubled, or even increased significantly in many areas. Not only were more roads needed, but they would also need to be built with thicker pavements and wider lanes to match the engineering of newer cars and trucks. But other priorities in the Truman administration, particularly military involvement in Korea beginning in 1950, delayed the massive federal commitment that would be needed to complete a limited access, superhighway system. A national consensus for highway improvement existed by the early 1950s, but it was far from clear exactly what to do about it.¹²⁶

The truce in Korea, a postwar downturn in the economy, and persistently rising numbers of trucks and automobiles on American roads made the reorganization of the federal-aid highway program a high priority for Dwight D. Eisenhower when he assumed office in 1953. As a former general, Eisenhower understood first hand the power of modern highways to move people and goods. He also strongly believed that improved transportation—specifically the construction of a new interstate highway system—would be the very foundation of stable economic growth and widespread prosperity in the United States for decades to come. But the cost would be high, and the congressional politics surrounding highway legislation were complex and easily misjudged. In 1954 Eisenhower asked an old friend and colleague, former general Lucius D. Clay, to head an advisory committee to make recommendations on how to shape highway policy. In January of 1955 Clay's committee reported to Congress that a "national highway program" of limited access superhighways would require a \$25 billion commitment by Congress in order to cover a 90% share of construction costs over the next ten years. Clay urged that the federal share of the bill be financed through the sale of bonds, to be liquidated by the proceeds of the federal gasoline tax. But other highway planners and advocates lobbied for a system financed by tolls, and many different funding and highway planning strategies were considered in Congress over the next year and a half. In its 1956

¹²⁴ Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 187.

¹²⁵ Kurian, *Datapedia*, 267.

¹²⁶ Historian Tom Lewis describes the general consensus behind highway improvements at the time in terms of support from elected officials, unions, private trade groups, lobbyists, and newspaper editorialists. Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), 98-123.

federal-aid highway legislation, Congress finally decided to create a “highway trust fund,” separate from the rest of the federal budget, financed by an increased gasoline tax set aside solely for that purpose. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 also abandoned the typical pattern of annual or biennial highway authorizations, and instead authorized \$25 billion over the next ten years to cover 90% of construction costs of what it described as the National System of Interstate and Defence Highways.¹²⁷

The Interstate Highway legislation of 1956 initiated what is often characterized as the largest and most expensive public works projects in history. No federal policy or law since the 1785 Federal Land Ordinance would have as great an impact on the American landscape. As the Interstate Highways were built, mostly in the next two decades, the cost of the undertaking rose and the impacts exceeded what all but the most prescient had anticipated. The Interstate Highway system required taking more land by eminent domain than had been taken in the history of road building in the United States; the 40,000-mile system was the equivalent of hundreds of new throughways and turnpikes.¹²⁸ Rural regions of the country became less isolated, and the nation became more integrated—some would say homogenized—than ever in its history. In cities, entire neighbourhoods were demolished as “expressways” were routed directly through them, facilitating “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” programs, while hastening the already unbridled movement of people and businesses to the “suburbs.”¹²⁹ The Interstates changed the overall demographics of the entire nation, as California and the sunbelt cities of the south and southwest grew around the framework of the new highways. They resulted in the economic stimulus Eisenhower wanted, and a great deal more. As moving goods by truck became cheaper and more flexible, freight costs declined, and businesses

¹²⁷ Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1939-1989*. Revised edition (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 70-93; Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 98-122.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 128.

¹²⁹ It is important to note the differences between postwar Interstates and prewar automotive “parkways.” In the nineteenth century municipal park and parkway systems had shaped urban growth in almost every major American city; because of their status as parkland, parkways could be designed as limited access roadways, providing express routes that were also usually restricted to noncommercial traffic. Early noncommercial, automotive parkways, such as the Bronx River Parkway (1923) in Westchester County, New York, were planned as parts of regional park systems, and opened up corridors adjacent to large cities for residential development. The postwar Interstate system incorporated some of the design features of parkways (such as limited access and elimination of intersections) but was more inspired by European superhighways. Above all the Interstates were designed for commercial as well as noncommercial traffic. In order to handle large trucks, the new superhighways would be heavily engineered, with the widest curves and flattest gradients possible, resulting in highways that little resembled prewar automotive parkways. The impacts on surrounding land use and “sprawling” urbanization also could be profound: commercial superhighways dispersed not only residential populations but industries and businesses of all types, as well. (cont.)

were able to shift to more advantageous locations, whether just out of town, or across the country. Few aspects of American life and landscape would be unaffected by the combination of widespread automobile ownership and a national system of superhighways on which to drive them.

If parks and roads were two related aspects of the modern topography taking shape across the continent, it followed that national parks, in particular, were affected by the unprecedented federal road building. Park Service officials, including Conrad Wirth and Thomas Vint, knew first hand how federal-aid highway modernizations had affected the park system in the 1920s and 1930s; they could not have missed the significance, for their own efforts, of the debates leading up to the 1956 highway legislation. The Interstate Highway plans that took shape between 1954 and 1956 demanded that Wirth and the Park Service react, just as Horace Albright had responded in 1924 to the original federal-aid program. To a significant degree, Mission 66 was that new response. Even the overall concept and bureaucratic structure of Mission 66 was influenced by the Interstate Highway debate. In his memoirs, Conrad Wirth describes how "one weekend in February 1955" he was trying to imagine "what Congress wanted to hear" in order to break the cycle of inadequate annual appropriations.¹³⁰ Lucius Clay's report, entitled *A Ten-Year Highway Program*, had been made to Congress the month before.¹³¹ Although Wirth does not mention Clay's proposal or Interstate Highways, the essence of the Mission 66 proposal was also to present a massive, ten-year modernization program that would be conceived outside the traditional scope of annual budget authorizations. In the case of Mission 66, however, Wirth would not attempt to prepare legislation to be debated in Congress, but would simply describe a policy initiative to be approved administratively by the Secretary of the Interior, and ultimately by Eisenhower himself.

The result was a far broader economic stimulus, and a far greater encouragement to low density urbanization and development.

¹³⁰ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 238-239. In a 1958 in-house history of the Mission 66 program, Wirth conceives of the initiative on February 6 and 7, primarily as a means of addressing the inadequacies of annual appropriations by seeking authorization for a ten-year construction program. Roy E. Appleman, "A History of the National Park Service Mission 66 Program," January 1958, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Centre).

¹³¹ The report was presented to Congress in January and published in February. Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 112; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 214-215.

Chapter 7: Responses to the Dilemma and to Modernism

7.1 Media Responses to Postwar Conditions

Mission 66 was not just a response to the emerging Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, although the proposals that led to that legislation influenced the timing and structure of Conrad Wirth's initiative. As Wirth considered the postwar "dilemma" of the parks and their changing geographic setting, he also faced strident and widespread dissatisfaction with what many considered the degenerating quality of the national park experience. By 1955 public anger with the conditions found in national parks had reached a crescendo. An entire journalistic genre had emerged, as dozens of reporters and editorialists decried the "shocking truth" about the national parks. The postwar criticism of national park conditions really began as a continuation of some of the "purist" assertions of the 1930s: the parks were being destroyed by overuse and automotive tourism. But in the early 1950s this criticism was often supported, not denied, by Park Service officials. Articles such as "Yosemite's Beauty Fast Disappearing," by *Los Angeles Times* writer Martin Litton (who was also a board member of the National Parks Association) appeared in large circulation magazines and newspapers and quickly found a receptive public. Litton wrote in his 1952 article that "Yosemite can't take it any more," and quoted the park's superintendent, Carl P. Russell, suggesting that "the natural appeal of the valley...will be gone in another fifty years" as a result of increasing numbers of tourists.¹³² Another National Parks Association Member, Paul Shepherd, Jr., insisted "something was amiss" in the way the public was using parks. Shepherd bemoaned the commercialization and rapid pace of park visits, and felt that "a large majority of visitors [were] unaware of the peculiar meaning...of the parks." The increasingly affluent "American tourist," in constant search for novelty and leisure activities, was described in terms previously reserved for dam builders and loggers, as a powerful and destructive threat. Shepherd did not feel more money for parks was the answer: "More money to handle more people" would only mean "greater pressure" on park resources. "Time has

¹³² Russell went on to describe his solution, in which all park development would be removed to the Big Meadows area, and only day use would be allowed in Yosemite Valley. Martin Litton, "Yosemite's Beauty Fast Disappearing," *National Parks Magazine* 26, no. 111 (October 1952-December 1952): 164-68. (Reprinted from September 1 edition of *The Los Angeles Times*.)

shown our parks to have a maximum carrying capacity and intrinsic qualities which render an indiscriminate recreational policy obsolete.”¹³³

But the “purist” opinions urging more “discriminating” park policies, typical of articles appearing in *National Parks Magazine*, and *the Living Wilderness* (published by the National Parks Association and the Wilderness Society respectively) were soon drowned out by publications with far greater readership. And for commentators such as Bernard DeVoto, more money definitely was needed as part of the solution for the postwar dilemma of the parks. A western historian, novelist, and one of the most influential columnists of his day, DeVoto was originally from Ogden, Utah. As a leading opponent of the Echo Park dam he had become a national voice on western conservation issues. His essay, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” appeared in his *Harper’s Magazine* column, “The Easy Chair,” in 1953 and incited outrage among a large and diverse group of readers. Following much of reasoning Newton Drury had described four years earlier, DeVoto insisted that “a lack of money has now brought our national park system to the verge of crisis.” Perhaps less concerned with whether the increasingly disaffected and angry public fully appreciated the “peculiar meaning” of the parks, he noted that campgrounds were “slums,” roads and trails dangerous, and staff housing “antiques or shacks” that would “produce an egg shortage if you kept chickens in them.” Congress had asked the Park Service to operate “a big plant on a hot-dog-stand budget,” and as a result the parks were “beginning to erode away.” DeVoto was sure Congress would not appropriate what he considered adequate funds (\$250 million over five years) to address the crisis, and therefore there was only one alternative: “The national park system must be temporarily reduced to a size for which Congress is willing to pay.” He urged that Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, and Rocky Mountain national parks be closed, and that the Army patrol them until they could safely be reopened. Perhaps then an outraged public would finally bring the “nationally disgraceful situation to the really serious attention of the Congress which is responsible for it.”¹³⁴

Over the next two years, other major magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader’s Digest* investigated conditions in national parks and published feature articles that stressed overcrowding and inadequate facilities in the parks. But the articles

¹³³ Paul Shephard, Jr., “Something Amiss in the National Parks,” *National Parks Magazine* 27, no. 115 (October-December 1953): 150-151, 187-190.

¹³⁴ Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine* 207, no. 1241 (October 1953): 49-52.

did not blame the Park Service; in fact they almost always described the unselfish dedication of park staff attempting to work under impossible conditions. Unlike “purist” critiques, which were aimed at Park Service policy, the press that followed DeVoto’s column blamed Congress for not giving the agency enough funds to do its job. Park superintendents—or often Wirth himself—were interviewed and provided much of the information for these articles, and it was clear that the Park Service did not regret this kind of negative publicity. But a decidedly different popular image of the national parks took shape in the years that immediately preceded Mission 66. “Make sure you are prepared for almost anything in the way of personal discomfort, annoyance, and even danger,” warned *Travel* magazine, which suggested \$500 million would be needed over five years to bring the parks out of their “slum-like depths.”¹³⁵ The *Saturday Evening Post* suggested that “the people are wearing out the scenery,” while *Reader’s Digest* described a “perversion” of the national park idea in Yosemite Valley.

The popular media had never described the national parks in such harsh terms. The overcrowding and deterioration of developed areas were also presented as an indicator of the condition of the parks overall; the poor condition of the frontcountry, in other words, was usually not considered separately from the ecological health (or lack of it) of the backcountry. The biological condition of the parks rarely caught the attention of journalists in the early 1950s. When they described the parks as “eroding away,” they described dangerous roads and trails, slum-like campgrounds, and overcrowded restaurants and hotels. In fact in many parks, which had yet to experience the effects of the “backpack boom” of the next decade, the backcountry was probably not as devastated as the frontcountry experience perhaps suggested. Magazine articles appearing in 1954 and 1955, however, claimed that “human erosion” caused by rising numbers of visitors and low Park Service budgets was “destroying the parks,” without making such a distinction. In almost every case, the articles suggested massive park budget increases should be made to pay for road repairs, campground development, and other construction to better accommodate larger numbers of people and cars. The estimates for the total cost of such a modernization of the system steadily rose from DeVoto’s \$250 million, to

¹³⁵ Jerome B. Wood, “National Parks: Tomorrow’s Slums?” *Travel* 101, no. 4 (April 1954): 14-16.

\$600 million, which was estimated as the “backlog” of needed park development by 1954.¹³⁶

Some authors also suggested, however, that a complete reorientation of Park Service policy should accompany increased appropriations for modernization and construction. *Reader's Digest* argued for the elimination of “resort activities,” including many overnight accommodations, and getting back to the “traditional policy and functions” of the Park Service, which implied fewer “amusements” and better preserved opportunities for more reflective, direct appreciation of scenery away from roads and hotels. *The Saturday Evening Post* stressed the reform of concession contracts and conditions as a big part of the answer, noting that Wirth had already secured better terms and increased capital investments from concessioners since he became director in 1951.¹³⁷ For both of these articles, Conrad Wirth clearly was supplying estimates of the “backlog” of capital investment, and ideas for policy initiatives such as concession reform, as well. Wirth was quoted extensively in these and other articles, and *The Saturday Evening Post* included a short biography of Wirth and a description of his efforts to keep the system together despite congressional indifference. Wirth himself popularized certain characterizations of the situation—such as the parks being “loved to death”—to describe a “seemingly hopeless situation.”¹³⁸

Wirth may not have personally orchestrated the media interest in national parks between 1953 and 1955, but he successfully used it to shape the public debate on the condition of the parks. Most authors disturbed about the future of the system wondered why Congress would not make larger appropriations, not whether some sort of limits should be imposed on the number of visitors to the parks. A 1955 article titled “Crisis in Our Parks,” for example, followed a familiar formula of deploring the overuse and crowded condition of public facilities, and then laying the blame with Congress for failing to pay for more development. Conrad Wirth’s 1953 testimony to the House appropriations subcommittee was quoted at length: “It is hard for me...to understand why during times of prosperity; times of great advancement in our economic conditions; times of advancement in our standard of living, yes, in times when individuals are getting so much social and economic benefit out of their great scenic and historic treasures, we are

¹³⁶ Charles Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” *The Reader's Digest* 66, no. 393 (January 1955): 45-50; Robert M. Yoder, “Twenty-Four Million Acres of Trouble,” *Saturday Evening Post* 227, no. 1 (July 3, 1954): 32, 78-80.

¹³⁷ Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth,” 50; Yoder, “Twenty-Four Million Acres of Trouble,” 80.

¹³⁸ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 234.

unable to get even the bare necessities to protect these treasures. Treasures that in themselves play an important part in our progress as a nation.”¹³⁹ In his first years as director, Wirth succeeded in depicting the postwar crisis in the national park system largely as one of inadequate funding, not too many visitors. In the process he also enhanced his own image as a dedicated and disinterested public servant fighting against congressional apathy. The magazine articles that followed Bernard DeVoto’s lead might have found reason to condemn the Park Service leadership, but ended up depicting a dedicated agency facing imposing challenges with too few resources.

7.2 Responses to Modernism: Jackson Lake Lodge

When Mission 66 was unveiled in 1956, it would represent both continuity and change for the national park system. But it would be the change that many people would notice first. Certainly the rhetoric of the day encouraged this perception. “Old traditions seemed to have determined standards far beyond their time,” Wirth told his planners, and therefore “nothing was to be sacred except the ultimate purpose to be served.”¹⁴⁰ In one important example, a dramatic new approach to park architecture was already taking shape in the early 1950s at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, where events had their own momentum thanks to the philanthropic interest of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The establishment and expansion of Grand Teton National Park in the 1920s instigated more local controversy and congressional turmoil than any project the Park Service had undertaken until that time. Mather and Albright had long hoped to extend Yellowstone National Park to the south in order to include the awesome Teton Range and the adjacent valley, Jackson Hole, which was an important winter range for elk. Congress established a Grand Teton National Park in 1929, but with limited boundaries that protected only the mountains themselves, not the more valuable—and potentially developable—land of Jackson Hole. Since 1927 John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had collaborated covertly with Albright to finance the acquisition of much of the private land in the area. In 1930 Rockefeller’s involvement was made public knowledge as he revealed his intent to donate what would eventually be more than 33,000 acres in order to extend Grand Teton National Park. Local residents and the Wyoming congressional

¹³⁹ Anthony Netboy, “Crisis in Our Parks,” *American Forests* 61, no. 5 (May 1955): 24-27, 46-47. A transcript of Wirth’s February 1954 statement to the House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations is in Box 12, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre. In addition to these arguments, Wirth also narrated a slide show of decrepit and overcrowded facilities in the parks.

¹⁴⁰ Wirth, *Park, Politics, and the People*, 242.

delegation reacted angrily to the subterfuge involved in the land acquisitions. The legislation necessary for the federal government to accept the gift became politically impossible. After two sets of congressional hearings and a decade of bitter dispute, the matter was only resolved in 1943 when Franklin Roosevelt made the controversial decision to declare the area a National Monument, thereby making it possible to accept Rockefeller's gift without congressional action. The national park extension only occurred in 1950, after most of the controversy had finally subsided. The complete development of the park, in other words, would only be accomplished once Mission 66 made funds available.¹⁴¹

In the meantime, Rockefeller continued his involvement in the planning and development of the expanded national park by forming a new concessioner, the Grand Teton Lodge and Transportation Company, as a subsidiary of his private non-profit organization, Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. The non-profit concessioner planned a \$6-million lodge complex as part of what Rockefeller hoped would be a "pilot project" for postwar park development. Gilbert Stanley Underwood, the architect of the Ahwahnee and other prewar national park lodges, designed the new hotel and cabin complex, which Rockefeller personally sited on the shore of Jackson Lake, on a small plateau with sweeping views of the Teton Range. The elegant lodge, redolent of an earlier era of national park tourism, in some ways recalled the architect's prewar masterpieces. After entering the building under a massive *porte cochère* at ground level, visitors ascended a short flight of stairs to a spacious "lounge," more than two stories high, where they immediately encountered a wall of windows featuring the dramatic views of the Tetons, with a vast expanse of willow flats serving as a foreground. This entry sequence, and much of the underlying planning and spatial design of the hotel, suggested similar devices Underwood employed in his rustic lodges, such as the Ahwahnee or the Grand Canyon Lodge. But the novelty of the outward appearance of the Jackson Lake Lodge startled most observers. Underwood had worked extensively in concrete construction before, notably at the Ahwahnee. At that prewar hotel, however, the concrete had been formed and stained to resemble other materials, such as wood siding and beams. The concrete of the Jackson Lake Lodge was also given a wood texture and stained light brown; but in this case the "shadowood" plywood pattern impressed on the surface suggested the rough wooden moulds used in concrete construction rather than clapboard siding or timbers.

¹⁴¹ Righter, *Crucible for Conservation*, 47-65, 85-102.

This handling of concrete reinforced the modernist inspiration of the building's massing, which Underwood conceived as an interlocking series of large rectangular boxes, topped by shed roofs. The massing directly expressed the functions and spaces of the interior volumes. Large horizontal bands of windows and the massive window wall of the main lounge further emphasized and confirmed the influence of contemporary American modernist architectural design (fig. 4).¹⁴²

Underwood had come out of retirement for this last major commission of his career. While he showed his mastery of a building type he had done so much to develop—the national park lodge—he also made a striking statement about how postwar park architecture could adopt contemporary structural design and construction technology. While the results were dramatic, the architect had not abandoned many of the basic qualities that had made his earlier work seem so appropriate in its settings. The spatial sequence entering the building, and the importance of views of the surrounding landscape in that sequence, were comparable to his other lodges, as were the earth tones and rough textures of the building materials. The success of the project, which like Underwood's earlier lodges soon was frequented by celebrities as well as the general public, helped make the lodge an important indicator of future directions park architecture might take. Conrad Wirth, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Rockefeller's son, Laurance Rockefeller, all spoke at the Jackson Lake Lodge dedication, held in June 1955, as Mission 66 planning was in full swing. As a "pilot project," Underwood's updated approach to national park architecture had won their support. The architect had taken some of the contemporary trends of midcentury American modernism—the extensive use of concrete, large windows, flat rooflines, geometric massing—and adapted them to the purposes, program, and goals of postwar national park planning. The lodge was massive, for example, but it was also partially set into the earth, given shed roofs with low angles, and constructed in earth tone materials all of which helped make it less visually obtrusive in its setting. Above all, it was conceived around the view that its main windows showcased. The entire building served as a viewing platform, with outdoor terraces oriented to the view as well. Unmistakably modernist in its inspiration, the Jackson Lake Lodge revised traditional assumptions of what made architecture "appropriate" in the

¹⁴² Paula S. Reed and Edith B. Wallace, "Jackson Lake Lodge, National Historic Landmark Nomination." This National Historic Landmark nomination form is available through the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, Washington, DC (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/designations/samples>). The Jackson Lake Lodge was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2003, in part for its significance as an influential precedent of Modernist architectural design in the parks.

setting of a national park. For Underwood, Wirth, and the Rockefellers, the new lodge succeeded by increasing capacity for the enjoyment of park landscapes, while reducing the visual intrusion of the necessary facilities. The entire complex, including a large parking lot heavily planted with native trees that broke up and concealed its extent, minimized its architectural presence, while it maximized the program and services provided.

Not everyone agreed that the new lodge indicated a positive direction for national park architecture. The Jackson Lake Lodge made passionate architectural critics out of many not previously known for their opinions on such matters. That August *The New York Times* reported on the “debate over national parks design” that the lodge had incited. “Those who bitterly deride the appearance of the...lodge,” noted the reporter, “level their aesthetic barbs at the mammoth central structure chiefly because it does not look ‘rustic.’” Unmoved by the building’s efficient handling of larger numbers of tourists, or by its minimal visual presence (it was mostly hidden from viewpoints elsewhere in the park), critics were outraged because the lodge did not look more like the Old Faithful Inn in nearby Yellowstone (fig. 5), or like other classic examples of rustic park architecture that they insisted were more effective in “blending with the scenery.” Part of their concern stemmed from indications that the lodge would serve as a design precedent for the still secret “10-year program” Wirth obliquely mentioned in his remarks at the dedication ceremony. Such a program apparently would mean more contemporary architecture that completely redefined what it meant to “harmonize” with the unique settings of the national parks.¹⁴³

Criticism of modernist design in national parks, like criticism of modernism in the United States generally, was already an established trend in 1955. It was the “purists” who first voiced concerns specifically about the appearance of postwar park architecture. National Parks Association board member Martin Litton, who wrote on the deterioration of Yosemite Valley in 1952, also derided plans for a \$2.5 million redevelopment of the “rustic, somewhat dilapidated” Yosemite Lodge. He suggested the new lodge would consist of “government-approved modern structures that stand out like a sore thumb.”¹⁴⁴ His fellow board member, Devereux Butcher, went much further in his denunciation of the new architectural trend. His 1952 article, “For a Return to Harmony in Park

¹⁴³ Jack Goodman, “Controversy Over Lodge in the West,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, August 7, 1955.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Litton, “Yosemite’s Beauty Fast Disappearing,” *National Parks Magazine* 26, no. 111 (October 1952): 164-168).

Architecture,” expressed outrage at the idea that the “gray, weathered Paradise Inn” at Mount Rainier, for example, might be replaced by a “typical businessman’s hotel building like those in so many small towns—red brick, five to eight stories, flat roof, glass and iron marquee over front door.” Butcher had been the executive director of the National Parks Association from 1942 to 1950 and still edited the organization’s magazine. A former architecture student and a trained artist and photographer, his 1952 article was an impassioned plea—one that he and others would repeat throughout the Mission 66 period—for “an immediate return to the sound policies of park architecture that have prevailed these many years.” The building that ignited his crusade was a dining room built in 1951 in the Skyland concessioner area of Shenandoah National Park. He felt the new building was designed “along modernistic lines...out of tune with all the rest of the park’s beautiful architecture.” A “picturesque and home-like” structure destroyed in a recent fire had been replaced by a new dining room with a flat roof and walls of almost floor to ceiling rectangular windows. Butcher was offended enough to undertake a national tour to observe other examples of recent construction. Although there was not much being built in parks at the time, there was enough for Butcher to ask, “Why has the Service abandoned its long-established policy of designing buildings that harmonize with their environment and with existing styles?” A new maintenance building at Big Bend National Park, he claimed, resembled a factory, and residences in Saguaro, Zion, and Glacier were “ugly beyond words to describe” and “unsuitable” because they failed to achieve “harmonious” relationship to their sites. Prewar park architecture that exemplified such harmony often stood nearby as a silent rebuke to the newer construction. Other negative examples included a comfort station at Glacier with a flat roof, and the new museum/office building in the administrative area of Everglades.¹⁴⁵

Butcher’s immediate suspicion was that the Park Service had “farmed out” the design work and that consulting architects, unfamiliar with national parks, had instigated the trend towards modernist materials and design. But Wirth, Vint, and their cadre of regional design staff and park superintendents very much retained their control over all planning and design in the parks. But by the 1940s, they had also begun to change Park Service design policies. Underwood’s Jackson Lake Lodge was only the most spectacular result. The San Francisco architect Eldridge T. (“Ted”) Spencer, consulting for the Yosemite concessioner, designed what were probably the first clearly modernist

¹⁴⁵ Devereux Butcher, “For a Return to Harmony in Park Architecture,” *National Parks Magazine* 26, no. (cont.)

buildings in a national park, a service station (1941) and employee residences (1942), using flat roofs, large windows, and no ornamentation (fig. 6).¹⁴⁶ In 1949 Newton Drury approved Spencer's plan for a new Yosemite Lodge, also in a modernist idiom, although the design was changed and not built until later. There were other modest examples (including those cited by Butcher) of experiments in what was usually described as "contemporary" architecture, all of which at least tacitly met with the approval of regional directors, design staff, and Vint himself, who reviewed all design proposals in Washington. Butcher's critique of the new direction in park architecture struck a nerve, however, and was soon chorused by other "purists," including Drury, who insisted in 1953 that he had never condoned the "modernistic structures...that were perpetrated on us by well-meaning but misguided architects" while he was director. He went on to express complete confidence, however, in his "good friend and colleague, Tom Vint," with whom he had never disagreed on "any matter involving design."¹⁴⁷

Butcher and those who supported his point of view felt Park Service designers had lost their way and needed to be reminded of their architectural tradition. In his 1952 article, Butcher went on to explain the principles of "harmonious" park architecture, presumably to officials such as Thomas Vint and Herbert Maier, who had developed the principles in the first place. Design, colour, and site were the factors Butcher suggested needed to be considered so that a building could be "fairly hidden by features of the landscape." More to the point, Butcher believed that "pioneers" and "Indians" had built structures of materials "close at hand," employing the simplest construction; therefore "their rugged architectural styles" were associated with "great open spaces." Furthermore, he explained, "we associate the Swiss chalet with evergreen forests and big mountains" and the "Indian adobe" with the landscape of the Southwest, while "Spanish might fit the Big Bend country." In the Appalachians, "the log cabin stands out in our minds as the original style." But "since we do not associate prefabricated building materials and modernistic styles with big open spaces," they created "inharmony in primitive landscapes." Butcher concluded with extensive quotations from architect Albert H. Good's 1935 *Park Structures and Facilities*, a Park Service catalogue of

111 (October 1952): 150-57; Miles, *Guardians of the Parks*, 132-133, 162-164.

¹⁴⁶ Spencer published the buildings in an architecture magazine (*Pencil Points* 23, 1942: 43-46; *The New Pencil Points* 24, 1943: 70-71).

¹⁴⁷ Newton B. Drury, letter to the editor, *National Parks Magazine* 27, no. 2 (January-March, 1953):39; See Jonathan Searle Monroe, "Architecture in the National Parks: Cecil Doty and Mission 66," Master of Architecture thesis, University of Washington, 1986.

Depression era design, which included a more nuanced “Apologia” for prewar rustic design.¹⁴⁸

Butcher’s explanation of the appeal of prewar park development was simplistic but also accurate: the associations with pioneer and Native American cultures may have been mostly imaginary, but the architectural fantasy resonated with the public. Log and boulder construction in national parks bore little resemblance to any actual vernacular structures, but the architecture was never intended as a reconstruction of history as much as an invocation of mythic historical themes. Postwar modernist park architecture—epitomized in the Jackson Lake Lodge—often featured low profiles and horizontal massing, as well as materials with muted colours and rough textures that helped new buildings “blend in” visually with their surroundings. But the new park architecture also assiduously eliminated the (admittedly spurious) historical associations of the rustic era, replacing them with architectural surfaces swept clean of the delightful decorative elements that had been so essential to Underwood’s own prewar architecture, as well as that of Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, Maier, Vint, and others. While the Jackson Lake Lodge actually was a more muted and less elaborate visual presence than a park rustic lodge (at least one with the same capacity) would have been, stripped of a decorative façade evoking pseudo-vernacular construction and traditional historical narratives, it struck Butcher (and other critics) as harsh, industrial, “inharmonious,” and “urban.”

As for the siting of buildings, Butcher erroneously described prewar park architecture as “fairly hidden by features of the landscape.” National park rustic buildings had been, above all, picturesque architecture. They formed elements of overall landscape scenes and compositions. Far from being “hidden,” Colter’s Grand Canyon buildings, Underwood’s Ahwahnee, Maier’s park museums, or the park administration buildings designed by Vint all formed important compositional elements of perceived landscape scenes. Their complex, expensive, and usually non-structural façades of overscaled timber and stone, carefully detailed adobe, or labour intensive log construction were hardly intended to be unnoticed: they were powerful statements of both sober civic administration and vacation fantasy. They complemented and enabled an appreciation of place as picture. For many visitors such architectural imagery was a welcome and even necessary aspect of the aesthetic enjoyment of park scenery. For them, modernist

¹⁴⁸ Butcher quoted Harvard Graduate School of Design dean Joseph Hudnut—who did as much as anyone to bring architectural modernism to the United States—in support of his contention of the importance of associations in architecture. Butcher, “For a Return to Harmony in Park Architecture,” 153-154.

architecture was not appropriate above all because it conflicted with their aesthetic conception and appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Modernist architecture—at least as Underwood and others adapted it to the requirements of the Park Service—did in fact offer the best means of accommodating larger numbers while truly minimizing the visual presence of a building. But in the end the critics of the Jackson Lake Lodge were not really asking for less architectural presence; they wanted more. They missed the pseudo-vernacular associations and historical references—and the entire picturesque conception of park architecture—that enhanced their aesthetic enjoyment of national park landscapes.

Mission 66 soon established the Park Service as an important architectural patron, willing to employ the most contemporary design ideas that leading professionals had to offer. In 1954 Conrad Wirth had famously rejected Frank Lloyd Wright as the architect for a new restaurant in Yosemite Valley. Wirth derided the proposal as a “mushroom-dome type of thing,” and a “thing to see, instead of being for service.”¹⁴⁹ The next year, however, he dedicated the Jackson Lake Lodge, and at the same time his own design offices were producing modernist designs some of which continued to startle and occasionally outrage at least some critics. In 1955, Park Service architects designed futuristic shade structures for Coquina Beach at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (fig. 7). The large metal louvers resembled a series of attached airplane wings, and attracted notice; the project was published in *Progressive Architecture* and won an American Institute of Architects (AIA) national award.¹⁵⁰ The local newspaper, however, reported that “until people get used to the modern trend,” the structures were likely to “cause as much comment as three nude men on a Republican Convention program.” At least some critics wondered why the Park Service had abandoned the “wattle and daub” reconstructions of nearby historic sites.¹⁵¹

By 1957, as Mission 66 buildings started to appear in the parks, a debate of sorts occurred between the architectural profession, which generally strongly supported the new architecture, and other groups, including “purists” and sometimes local newspaper editors and reporters. Devereux Butcher grew increasingly incensed, deriding Welton Becket’s concessioner buildings at Yellowstone’s Canyon Village (fig. 8), for example, as

¹⁴⁹ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ “Award Citations,” *Progressive Architecture* 37, no. 1 (January 1956): 92; “Bathing and Public Facilities,” *Progressive Architecture* 39, no. 7 (July 1958): 88-89.

¹⁵¹ Dan Morrill, “Coquina Beach at Nags Head to Feature Modern Trend in Architectural Ideas,” *Virginian-Pilot*, July 22, 1956.

“colossal and of freak design.” He insisted that the Park Service was violating “national policy governing our national parks” by creating “conspicuous park structures.” Returning to Jackson Lake Lodge, he now condemned it as “Alcatraz,” and the “ugliest building in the park and monument system.” Later that year Butcher was supported by the director of the National Wildlife Federation, Ernest Swift, who charged that Mission 66 was “prostituting the scenic grandeurs of our national parks” by accommodating too many visitors in buildings like the Jackson Lake Lodge, which, he claimed, was “a concrete monstrosity built for that sub-species of *Homo sapiens* called the tourist.” If John Steinbeck had needed source material in writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, Swift added, he “could have studied park visitors.”¹⁵² The virulent rhetoric often returned to the theme of “modernistic” design, which was associated with “overdevelopment” and inappropriate levels of use. There were simply too many people (and perhaps, for some critics, the wrong kind of people) using parks in ways the authors scorned. Modernist architecture—a potent symbol of Mission 66 policy and planning—manifested and facilitated the unconscionable trend.

Authors in architectural trade magazines, however, expressed delight that the Park Service had abandoned “associative rusticity” in favour of “better and more imaginative architecture.” In January 1957 *Architectural Record* published a long defence of Mission 66 architectural design. “*Architectural Record*...undertakes a crusade,” wrote author Emerson Goble, “...we are happy to join in the current campaign of improvement...known as Mission 66.” Goble understood the essence of the criticism of Mission 66, noting that postwar “mass use” was “both the reason for Mission 66 and the cause of concern to the protectors of the purist persuasion.” The Park Service wanted to expand the capacity of the parks, but not too much, and there was “a neat question as to where to draw the line.” While some might feel that no buildings at all should be allowed in parks, most understood the necessity. According to Goble, Mission 66’s detractors felt that “if we must have buildings, let’s have good, safe, sentimental rustic stuff that everybody associates with scenery.” But Goble saw the opportunity “for architects in the world’s best building sites,” to “add something to the nobility of nature in her most exalted moods.” Citing new park concessioner projects, such as the Yosemite Lodge (fig. 9, Spencer & Ambrose), the Canyon Lodge at Yellowstone (Welton Becket and Associates), the Colter Bay developed area at Grand Teton (Spencer & Ambrose), as well

¹⁵² Devereux Butcher, “Sunshine and Blizzard,” *National Parks Magazine* 31, no. 128 (January 1957): 24-(cont.)

as the Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument (figs. 10, 11), Anshen and Allen), Goble hailed the “courage” of the Park Service in insisting that “man-made art is not necessarily sinful, [and] inspired architecture need not be egocentric or competitive” with the appreciation of scenery.¹⁵³

This vein of critical appreciation of Mission 66 architecture continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1964 the architectural critic Wolf Von Eckardt concluded that “the Park Service dares to build well,” commending the Wright Brothers Visitor Center (fig. 12, Mitchell and Giurgola), the Gettysburg Visitor Center and Cyclorama (figs. 13, 14, Richard Neutra), and Cabot and Benson’s shade structures at Cape Hatteras as “outstanding contemporary buildings by outstanding modern architects.” Von Eckardt felt that each deserved “an award for architectural excellence,” something he insisted could rarely be said of government buildings. Quoting at length from a conversation with Cabot (now chief architect in Washington) Eckardt compared the Park Service favourably to the “dreary mediocrity of federal architecture.”¹⁵⁴ In 1970 the AIA awarded a citation to the Park Service as an organization for its “continuing effort to provide excellent design at all levels in our national parks.” The next year the *AIA Journal* featured a portfolio of Mission 66 architecture, including the Quarry, Wright Brothers buildings, as well as the Flamingo Visitor Center at Everglades National Park (figs. 15-16, Harry L. Keck, Jr.), which had “serve[d] architecture well,” and been the basis of the national award.¹⁵⁵

7.3 Park Service Adoption of Modernism

There were strong parallels between trends in postwar park architecture and those in park planning. Just as prewar rustic villages could not be expanded to meet greater demand without unacceptable encroachment on park features, rustic architectural style (at least for Wirth, Underwood, and the Rockefellers) could not successfully accommodate the expanded capacity and programs of the postwar period. If postwar park buildings continued to be conceived as picturesque architecture, they would grow into a far larger visual presence than they had been. They would not remain compositional components of the landscape. They would dominate, not complete, scenes. The adapted modernism

33; Ernest Swift, “Parks—or Resorts?” *National Parks Magazine* 31, no. 131 (October 1957): 147-148.

¹⁵³ Emerson Goble, “Architecture (?) for the National Parks,” *Architectural Record* 121, no. 1 (January 1957): 173-85.

¹⁵⁴ Wolf Von Eckardt, “The Park Service Dares to Build Well,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1964, G6.

¹⁵⁵ Robert E. Koehler, “Our Park Service Serves Architecture Well,” *AIA Journal* 1 (January 1971): 18-25.

Underwood supplied in 1955 accommodated increased, centralized programs more efficiently and economically. If decried as brutally utilitarian, such architecture nevertheless minimized its visual presence. Much of the extent of the facility was indeed “hidden” in a manner that rustic architecture had never been intended to accomplish. The Jackson Lake Lodge complex, for example, had 300 rooms in addition to restaurants and other facilities. The massive Old Faithful Inn opened in 1904 with 140 rooms. While the Jackson Lake complex sprawled its linear motel units over a larger area, the extent of the development was not immediately apparent and did not encroach visually on the surrounding landscape. The Old Faithful Inn may have been the most beloved of all national park lodges, but it was perched directly on the edge of rare thermal features and was hardly a “hidden” building. Underwood’s new direction in the siting and design of park buildings logically complemented and implemented postwar park planning priorities.

Critics such as Litton, Butcher, and Drury erred by failing to recognize that modernist architecture did not create the new and difficult realities of national park management, it responded to them. Attempts to recreate rustic design would not have been successful, because it was impossible to return to the prewar social, economic, and geographic contexts that had been the basis of that earlier idiom. At the very least, perpetuating a true rustic architecture in the postwar period would have required a reduction to prewar levels of visitation, at least if such development were to avoid growing into massive encroachments on park scenery. The public also demanded new levels of convenience and material comforts, a fact that a Park Service 1955 “Gallup survey” confirmed. And in a purely practical sense, true rustic architecture ended with the CCC: a massive national park development program could not be economically undertaken if it meant paying postwar prices for the work that had been previously done by an army of free labour. The end of the CCC, which Wirth had fought to avoid more than anyone, was the end of both the means and the aspirations of rustic park architecture.¹⁵⁶

The trend to modernist planning and architecture could no more be ignored in national parks than it could anywhere else in the United States. In the summer of 1956, as a large number of very noticeable park construction projects proceeded, the Mission 66 program burst on the scene with considerable fanfare. From the beginning Mission 66 also expressed a fully developed commitment to progressive, sometimes striking

modernist architectural design. Mission 66 architecture embodied the revised recreational planning policies that had been developed as the heart of the entire program. Wirth and Vint, in particular, had been the officials responsible for promoting and achieving rustic era design. They now embraced the new architecture because it expressed and enabled the new response they had devised to finally mitigate the conditions that had plagued them for the previous decade. For them, the resurrection of rustic design would have negated what they were trying to accomplish. It would embody prewar planning policies that had proven to be inadequate to new challenges.

At the same time, the commitment to modernist architecture was hardly a radical or daring direction for the Park Service. In fact, it put the agency squarely in the mainstream of American design of the period. By the mid-1950s, modernism had become the ubiquitous stylistic choice of corporations, government agencies, cultural institutions, housing developers, and retailers who together were remaking the American landscape. Corporate clients all over the world—from roadside restaurant chains to multinational businesses—embraced various strains of modernist architectural style. New postwar building technologies made construction more rapid, economical, and efficient. No builder could afford to ignore labour saving techniques such as the prefabrication of building elements, innovative uses of structural steel and concrete, curtain wall construction, and extensive applications of glass. These technologies had been developed in conjunction with modernist architecture, which exploited their potential. Quite apart from stylistic associations and iconographic meanings, modernist architecture was simply a more efficient way of producing buildings, especially large ones. America, and much of the world, had “gone modern” for many of the same reasons the Park Service had: more labour intensive, craft oriented construction was no longer economically competitive, and therefore for most clients—including government agencies—it was no longer an option. The armed forces in particular had preceded the Park Service in the adoption of modernism, for many related reasons. From the Wherry and Capehart ranch houses being built around army bases, to the vast new Air Force Academy designed by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill in Colorado Springs, the “government-approved modern structures” Martin Litton deplored in 1952 were in evidence everywhere by the mid-1950s.

¹⁵⁶ For the best summary of such aspirations, see Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures* (reprint of 1938 edition, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

Another major reason the Park Service adopted modernist architectural design was the general adoption of the idiom by professional consultants and in-house Park Service designers. As Mission 66 moved from planning to construction, architects were rapidly set to work drawing up detailed designs. The work they produced simply reflected the current state and tendencies of their profession. This had always been the case; earlier rustic era building had also reflected the influence of contemporary architectural practice. But by the 1950s a different set of influences was at work. American architects had not been slow to capitalize on the trend to modernist design, and in fact had been its leading instigators. Many architectural historians have described how a group of prewar European architects inspired the next generation of American practitioners to transform their profession. The Austrian architect Richard Neutra opened his office in Los Angeles in 1925, and over the next forty years produced a series of highly influential modernist residential and institutional buildings, employing extensive window walls, flat roofs, column grid construction, and elimination of ornamental details. In 1932 Phillip Johnson and the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock organized an exhibition of modernist architectural drawings and models at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and in their catalogue described the International Style of architecture, exemplified in work mostly by Neutra, Le Corbusier, and other mostly European architects. According to Johnson and Hitchcock, the new style emphasized the composition of space rather than building mass, asymmetry in plan and elevation, and the organized repetition of individual building units. Ornamentation and historical references were completely eliminated, while new building technologies and materials were embraced. Architectural historian Leonardo Benevolo describes how during the Depression a group of "former masters of the Bauhaus" emigrated to the United States and soon found receptive students and builders for their architectural ideas. By 1937 the founder of that famous German design school, Walter Gropius, headed the architecture department at the newly organized Harvard Graduate School of Design, while the German architect Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe was in charge of the architecture department at the Illinois Institute of Technology. By 1940 other leading figures of European modernism were living, teaching, and building influential projects in the United States. Modernist icons such as Lovell House in Los Angeles (Neutra, 1929) and the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Building (George

Howe & William Lescaze, 1932) indicated the progressive trend in both residential and commercial architecture.¹⁵⁷

By the late 1940s a generation of American professionals trained in the new approach had taken to the field. Architectural trade magazines were filled with examples of modernism in the United States, much of it more or less inspired by the International Style. The years immediately before Mission 66 were the apogee of the influence of modernism on American architectural practice. Architects and their clients favoured modernist architectural designs for both practical and ideological reasons. In New York, the United Nations Building (Wallace Harrison, et al., 1950) and the Lever House office tower (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Gordon Bunschaft, 1952) manifested both government and corporate America's commitment to the new architectural expression. As architectural historian Sarah Allaback observes in her history of Mission 66 visitor centres, the influence of contemporary American architectural practice inevitably extended to national park architecture: "The forces at work—capitalism and a society obsessed with progress—were prevalent throughout the country; it was only a matter of time before they would enter the national parks."¹⁵⁸ For a generation that witnessed the irrational destruction and historicizing excesses of fascist regimes in Europe, modernism offered a means to rapidly rebuild the world along expressly rational lines, free of no longer desirable historical associations. Even before Mission 66 began, Park Service architects had already abandoned the imaginative allusions of rustic architecture in favour of a more technical and rationalized approach to building that, in the context of the national parks, could symbolize the more scientific and efficient park management that Mission 66 planning hoped to accomplish.

Because the Mission 66 program also generated a sudden increase in the amount of work expected from the in-house design force, the agency expanded its use of private consulting design and engineering firms. The increased use of consultants influenced Mission 66 design, but Park Service architects and administrators had already set the policies and outlines that, in almost all cases, consultants were expected to follow. Allaback describes how even long time Park Service architects (some of whom had

¹⁵⁷ On the adoption of European Modernism in the United States, see Leonardo Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture* [1960] 2 vols. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1977), vol. 2, 629-683; William H. Jordy, *The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 87-164; Anthony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard* (New York: Norton, 2002).

produced important rustic buildings in the 1930s) by the early 1950s had developed new approaches in response to postwar conditions. "We couldn't help but change," explained Park Service architect Cecil J. Doty, "I can't understand how anyone could think otherwise, how it could keep from changing." Allaback observes that this statement is "a key to understanding" the purpose of Mission 66 architecture, "which was not to design buildings for atmosphere, whimsy, or aesthetic pleasure, but for change: to meet the demands of an estimated eighty million visitors," and to do so in a reasonably efficient way, considering the availability of new building technologies and the higher costs of labour and materials.¹⁵⁹

As a Park Service architect, Doty was a particularly important figure in the development of postwar park architecture. His attitudes and background, however, were typical of many of the agency's designers. An Oklahoman, he graduated in architectural engineering at Oklahoma A & M (now Oklahoma State). In 1934 he went to work for Herbert Maier in the Park Service CCC state park program in Oklahoma City. Maier and Vint trained the young designer into the kind of specialist they needed, giving him images and plans of their own rustic park buildings as examples to emulate. Doty was an adept designer and a talented illustrator, responsible for one of the finest prewar national park buildings, the adobe Region III Headquarters in Santa Fe (1939). In 1940 Doty went to work in the Region IV headquarters in San Francisco, assisting regional architect Lyle E. Bennett, the designer of the Painted Desert Inn (1940) and other important rustic park buildings.¹⁶⁰ By 1948, when Doty was promoted to regional architect for Region IV, his preliminary designs for buildings at Olympic, Joshua Tree, and other parks featured flat or shed roofs, reinforced concrete construction, and other clear signs that, as Allaback observes, "Doty and his Park Service colleagues were moving in a progressive direction." For his part, Doty later observed that "when the CCC and all that labour ended, getting stone was out of the question." Strict limitations on the cost of buildings imposed by Congress necessitated more economical building techniques. The influence of consultants also was a factor: Doty worked with the architect Eldridge Spencer on his

¹⁵⁸ Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 10.

¹⁵⁹ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 12-14.

¹⁶⁰ "Interview with Cecil J. Doty, Retired National Park Architect, March 10, 1985," conducted by Laura Soullière Harrison, transcript, p. 20, (Oklahoma State University Library); Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 215-221. The Region III Headquarters building in Santa Fe and the Painted Desert Inn in Petrified Forest National Park were designated National Historic Landmarks in 1987 for their significance in (cont.)

modernist designs for Yosemite in 1941 and 1942.¹⁶¹ By the early 1950s Doty was at work on preliminary designs for the “public use” buildings at Grand Canyon and Carlsbad Caverns (figs. 17-20). Their flat roofs, stark geometric massing, and contemporary materials confirmed that the architect’s transition to modernist design was complete. Doty’s story is instructive because Mission 66 architecture was, despite the involvement of consultants, controlled in-house, by Park Service designers. Doty’s new approach to park architecture was influential on his colleagues, but it was consistent with their own contemporary work, as well.

No extensive, official policy statement regarding the adoption of modernist design at the Park Service was ever made. During the New Deal, Thomas Vint and Herbert Maier had widely distributed plans and illustrations of appropriately rustic architecture, but Wirth made no comparably methodical efforts to standardize postwar park architecture. Following the Great Smoky Mountains conference, where he had been asked to issue an official policy on architectural design, he responded only with a brief statement: “Structures should be designed to reflect the character of the area while at the same time following up-to-date design standards. Park structures are to conform, to some extent, with the trend toward contemporary design and the use of materials and equipment accepted as standard by the building industry. However, restraint must be exercised in the design so that the structures will not be out of character with the area and so that the structures will be subordinated to their surroundings.”¹⁶² In January 1957, Wirth participated by phone in a WODC conference and verbally gave the following “guiding principles” for architectural design: “Whatever we do in the line of development in the Parks, it must fit the terrain and be inconspicuous; Durability is an important attribute; Sound planning is basic to economic results; Nothing should be built unless the need is already realized....Don’t try to lead your profession in fancy design.”¹⁶³ Architectural

American architecture. See Laura Soullière Harrison, *Architecture in the Parks: National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington, DC: 1987), 411-424, 441-450.

¹⁶¹ “Interview with Cecil J. Doty, Retired National Park Architect, March 10, 1985,” conducted by Laura Soullière Harrison, transcript, p. 21, (Oklahoma State University Library); Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 221.

¹⁶² Conrad L. Wirth, “Design of Structures,” memorandum, February 13, 1956 (Box 6, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

¹⁶³ These statements were transcribed and distributed to WODC design staff. Conrad L. Wirth, “Excerpt From Telephone Conference Between the Director and Chief, WODC...January 9, 1957” (Box 7, Design & Construction File, RG 79, National Archives). The comments were subsequently read to the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments at their March meeting in Washington, DC. The Advisory Board was discussing the issue of architectural design quality as a result of criticism, and praise, appearing in different journals. “Summary Minutes, 36th Meeting, Advisory Board on National (cont.)

design, in fact, was not a primary concern for Wirth. He felt that park development succeeded by “channeling” public use and therefore mitigating its impacts. In well planned examples, he wrote in 1958, the result would be the same “regardless of decorative colours used, or the style of architecture selected.” These were “details,” important “in their way.” But “park resources [were] neither destroyed nor preserved merely by application of a paintbrush or by a choice of...architectural décor.” The role of architecture in the parks was changing, as was architecture itself: “Construction and maintenance today are machine jobs,” Wirth observed. There were advantages to new building technology that would help minimize cost and construction time, and therefore impacts on surrounding landscapes.¹⁶⁴

Compared to Wirth’s long and detailed instructions on planning policy and process, however, his statements regarding architectural design were remarkably brief. The general sentiments Wirth expressed on appropriately “contemporary” design did not so much direct, as reflect, the gradual change among Park Service (and other) architects that had been underway since the late 1930s. The sudden burst of construction made possible by Mission 66 only made it seem as if there had been a sudden shift in design policy. Wirth, Vint, and others Park Service officials were fully aware and approved of what Doty and other architects were doing in the 1940s and early 1950s. Their official approval was confirmed by the fact that the work went forward. By the time architectural designs for Mission 66 were being finalized in 1956, adapted forms of “contemporary” architecture were already the accepted and desired style of architectural design in the national parks. Although there was occasional acknowledgement of critiques by Devereux Butcher and others, there was no more internal debate at the Park Service over the appropriateness of modernist architecture than there was over Wirth’s fateful decision not to restrict access to popular parks.¹⁶⁵ In fact the two important decisions were linked: if access by private automobile was to be allowed to grow unhindered to meet demand, a completely new approach to park architecture was as necessary as were new ideas for park planning.

Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments, March 5, 6, 7, 1957, Washington, DC,” (Yosemite National Park Archives).

¹⁶⁴ Conrad L. Wirth, “Mission 66 in the Headlines,” *National Parks Magazine* 32, no. 132 (January 1958): 8–9, 36–37.

¹⁶⁵ As was the case with the decision not to limit access to the parks, there were individual objections from superintendents and other Park Service officials to Wirth’s policy to proceed, in this case, with modernist architectural design. There is no evidence of a sustained debate of any kind on the subject, however, during the early years of Mission 66.

Chapter 8: Initial Management Priorities and Pilot Studies

8.1 Shifting Political Context

Some of the first research questions considered for this thesis were both obvious and complex: Why did Mission 66 development look modern rather than rustic? What changes did this imply not only for architectural design policy at the agency, but for the basic theoretical framework for park master planning? These questions required an examination of the administrative history of Mission 66 as well as the political context of its inception.

The relationship between the public and the national parks, and the public's expectations and perceptions of the Park Service, were shifting in the mid-1950s, just as the geographical and demographic contexts of the parks were. Beginning in 1953, the political context in which the Park Service operated changed decisively. The Cold War, the Korean War, and other dramatic international events of the period had prevented national parks from becoming a central concern for the Truman administration. Truman showed little interest in conservation issues, in any case, and western dam construction seemed to be the only aspect of New Deal resource planning that Congress was willing to continue. But the new Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower brought its own political priorities to the Department of the Interior. Wirth was one of the few Interior agency heads to be retained in 1953, and he was described by new Secretary of the Interior James Douglas McKay as uniquely qualified, and as one of the officials who gave government service "the prestige it deserves."¹⁶⁶ But if McKay felt the Park Service's expertise and tradition put the directorship above partisan considerations, he nevertheless immediately appointed members of his staff to a "management study committee" to recommend a complete reorganization of the agency. McKay admitted that the parks were underfunded, but also believed that reorganizing the bureaucracy could "increase efficiency" and so alleviate some problems in the parks without substantial budget increases.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Yoder, "Twenty-Four Million Acres of Trouble," 80.

¹⁶⁷ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1953 Annual Report*, 333-336; Conrad L. Wirth, Memorandum to Washington Office and All Field Offices, July 27, 1954 (Box 12, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

In December his study committee recommended that the Park Service reduce the size of the Washington and regional offices, and decentralize authority for management decisions to park superintendents. By February Wirth had an approved plan for the Washington office that reduced it slightly in size, and by May he issued "delegation orders" describing the increased authority of the regional directors and park superintendents in making management decisions for the parks.¹⁶⁸ But Wirth also used the reorganization to consolidate his own authority in the areas that mattered most to him. The most significant provisions of the 1954 reorganization reduced the number of design and construction staff and moved them out of the four regional offices and into two new "branch offices design and construction," soon known as the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC), in San Francisco, and the Eastern Office of Design and Construction (EODC), in Philadelphia. This effectively returned the Park Service to its pre-1933 configuration of design offices; the entire reorganization, in fact, can be seen as part of a broader effort to dismantle bureaucracies (like the regionalized Park Service design offices) that had been created to serve the New Deal. But the idea of centralizing the design and construction staff of the Park Service apparently did not originate with McKay's study committee. According to Wirth, such a reorganization had been advocated for some time by Thomas Vint himself. Vint remained the agency's "chief of design and construction" in Washington, and his position was greatly strengthened as he assumed supervision of regional design staff from the regional directors. The 1954 organization recalled the "field offices" in San Francisco and Philadelphia that Vint had supervised (from San Francisco) before 1933.¹⁶⁹ Sanford J. ("Red") Hill headed the new WODC in San Francisco, while Edward S. Zimmer was chief of the EODC in Philadelphia. Like Vint, both men were landscape architects and had long experience with the Park Service (as did so many of the agency's planners and designers of the period), and now answered directly to Wirth in Washington, through Vint rather than through the four regional directors (figs. 21-23).¹⁷⁰ If the 1954 reorganization purportedly

¹⁶⁸ Conrad L. Wirth, Memorandum to Washington Office and All Field Offices, July 27, 1954 (Box 12, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

¹⁶⁹ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1954 Annual Report*, 335-336; Wirth credits Vint with the idea of creating the Western and Eastern Offices of Design and Construction, which recalled the "field offices" Vint supervised in the pre-New Deal organization of the Park Service. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 292.

¹⁷⁰ Vernon L. Hammons, "A Brief Organizational History of the Office of Design and Construction, National Park Service, 1917-1962," unpublished report (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d.), 4-5; Russ Olsen, *Administrative History: Organizational Structures of the National Park Service 1917-1985* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985), 19-22, 73; Hillory (cont.)

reduced bureaucracy, it also consolidated Vint's—and therefore Wirth's—direct control over every aspect of planning and design in the parks. Once again Wirth had shown his bureaucratic ability to thrive under potentially threatening circumstances.

In hindsight, the 1954 management study and reorganization seemed to presage the introduction of Mission 66, which was proposed the following February.¹⁷¹ But Secretary McKay was attempting to improve bureaucratic efficiency throughout the Department of the Interior and was not preparing for budget increases; on the contrary, his stated goal in 1953 was to do more with the resources already available. The reorganization was part of a broader effort to restructure the entire executive branch early in Eisenhower's administration. Even though the formation of the WODC and EODC in 1954 were crucial to the subsequent organization of Mission 66, they were established independently, almost a year before Wirth's initiative was conceived.

But political attitudes toward increases in Park Service appropriations were about to shift, in any case. Following the truce in Korea, a postwar downturn in the economy soon provided new reasons for the Eisenhower administration to reconsider public works spending as a means of stabilizing the economy. Eisenhower greatly feared that a recession would be blamed on the Republicans, who in 1953 controlled Congress as well as the White House for the first time in two decades. There were other political reasons for the President to back a new parks initiative. Secretary of the Interior McKay, who advocated controversial policies such as bringing private power companies into partnership with public utilities, suffered from what historian Elmo Richardson describes as “foot in mouth affliction.” A former automobile dealer and then governor of Oregon, McKay's bluntness exacerbated issues such as the Echo Park dam (which Eisenhower supported) and contributed to a general perception that the administration was a poor steward of natural resources. Soon derided by opponents on conservation issues as “Giveaway McKay,” the secretary became a lightning rod and Eisenhower replaced him

A. Tolson, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials* [1964], revised as 75th Anniversary Edition by Harold P. Danz (Denver: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 19, 32, 37; “National and State Parks and Forests,” *Landscape Architecture* 38, no. 4 (July 1948): 106-107.

¹⁷¹ An 1977 agency history of the National Park Service's Denver Service Center describes the 1954 reorganization (erroneously) as the first step of the Mission 66 program. This claim subsequently appears in other sources, but without any further documentation. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Denver Service Center,” 1977, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver, Technical Information Centre).

in 1956. But in the meantime, any initiative at the Park Service that would help improve the administration's conservation image would be increasingly useful in political terms.¹⁷²

Eisenhower, like Truman, had little personal interest in national parks, recreational planning, or resource conservation issues. In his memoirs, he describes his "very considerable ignorance" on park issues, and clearly his priorities for public works were more likely to be Interstate Highways, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and federal dam projects. But Eisenhower also suggests in his memoirs that he and Secretary McKay had instigated Mission 66 early in 1954, after Eisenhower received a letter from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Rockefeller had just read DeVoto's *Harper's* column and agreed that the condition of the national parks was a "national tragedy." As a park advocate and benefactor, he wanted to know why something was not being done.¹⁷³ Rockefeller's status as a major political supporter deserved a quick response. In a memorandum to Secretary McKay, Eisenhower wrote that he had "been getting communications from people who seem to be genuinely concerned with what they believe to be the deterioration of our national parks," and that McKay should "take a second look." Eisenhower then claims that the planning for what became Mission 66 began at that point, "early in 1954," after McKay and "his associates at the Department of the Interior began a survey" which led to the Mission 66 program.¹⁷⁴ But in his description of these events, Eisenhower conflates his memory of the "management study" of the Park Service (which McKay had just completed in December 1953) and the proposal for Mission 66 that Wirth brought to McKay on his own in February of 1955. The two initiatives were not directly related. In his personal response to Rockefeller's letter at the time, Eisenhower only refers to McKay's recently completed study that would "permit more efficient use of existing manpower" at the Park Service. McKay's own response to the situation was to inform Rockefeller that a request for an additional \$550,000 dollars for park maintenance had been approved by the Budget Bureau.¹⁷⁵ More to the point, however, McKay also had a private meeting several days later with Rockefeller confidante, Horace Albright, who explained at least one specific point of concern: the delayed completion of the final

¹⁷² Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 33.

¹⁷³ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Dwight D. Eisenhower, December 10, 1953, (Rockefeller Archives Centre, Pocantico Hills).

¹⁷⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 549-550.

¹⁷⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., January 8, 1954; Douglas McKay to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., January 11, 1954, (Rockefeller Archives Centre, Pocantico Hills).

portion of the Colonial Parkway, running from the Williamsburg restoration to Jamestown, Virginia. McKay admitted to Albright that park construction money would actually be “considerably curtailed” under the administration’s proposed budget for 1955; he assured him, nevertheless, that the parkway would get his “personal attention.”¹⁷⁶ Rockefeller was satisfied by the response he received from the administration (officially and through Albright) and apparently let the matter drop. Although Rockefeller would go on to participate in national park development of the 1950s through his philanthropy, neither he nor Eisenhower initiated Mission 66. Other than the very brief assertion in Eisenhower’s memoirs, there are no other sources that contradict Wirth’s own descriptions of the origins of the program.

Between 1945 and 1955, the geographical, social, and political frameworks and assumptions for managing national parks had changed dramatically and permanently. As a Park Service chief planner since 1931 and director since 1951, Conrad Wirth understood these changes as well as anyone. Wirth’s bureaucratic sense and timing had served him well in his career, and early in 1955 he had decided that a dramatic proposal for greatly increased park appropriations would finally be more favourably received than they had been over the previous ten years. As it was crafted by Wirth and his staff early in 1955, Mission 66 would be enthusiastically endorsed by the Eisenhower administration and approved by Congress, which was in fact in a mood to appropriate even more money more quickly than requested.

Park Service officials such as Wirth and Vint understood the trends in American society and landscape following World War II primarily as a continuation of those that followed World War I; they both involved rapid increases in the numbers of people coming to national parks in automobiles, in the context of a rapidly growing and urbanizing (or “suburbanizing”) society. Their task in the 1950s, then, was to formulate as original, popular, and effective a vision for the park system as early Park Service professional staff had under Mather and Albright. Such a renewal would demand (as it had in the 1920s) new architectural and landscape designs, an expansion of the number and variety of parks in the system, further professionalization and diversification of Park Service staff, and, above all, a reiteration of the “master planning” process that Vint had first devised over twenty years earlier. The ambitions Wirth and his staff would describe for Mission 66 would be for a reinvention of recreational planning, of the National Park

¹⁷⁶ Horace M. Albright to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., January 14, 1954, (Rockefeller Archives Centre, (cont.)

Service, and to a degree of the park system itself, to meet a vastly expanded public demand in a context of rapid social and geographic change in the second half of the century.

The changes in American society and geography during the postwar period were so profound that the national park system inevitably would have changed in response. The questions of who would set new policies, and what those policies would be intended to achieve, developed into a struggle after 1955, as old conservation alliances began to break down and new ones formed. Perhaps no one understood fully—not the Park Service, other federal officials, members of Congress, park concessioners, nor early environmentalists—the degree to which the entire context of the modernizing American landscape was itself permanently changing, and therefore establishing new conditions, threats, and (hopefully) possibilities for the national park system. But in 1955, the principal question was simply: how would the National Park Service finally respond to the postwar park “dilemma”? In February of 1955 Conrad Wirth had an answer.

8.2 Administrative Reorganization

The creation of the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) and the Eastern Office of Design and Construction (EODC) in 1954 was essential to the subsequent proposal for Mission 66. The two offices answered directly to Washington and created a centralized administrative structure. The architects, landscape architects, engineers, and other professionals in the new offices had hardly settled in before Wirth proposed his ten-year modernization and expansion of the park system, now unofficially estimated to cost at least \$700 million. In San Francisco, landscape architect Red Hill headed the office, with supervising architect Lyle E. Bennet, supervising engineer Percy E. Smith, and supervising landscape architect Robert G. Hall as his staff. In Philadelphia, Edward Zimmer had a staff of John B. (“Bill”) Cabot, Robert P. White, and Harvey H. Cornell in the same positions, respectively. In Washington, Thomas Vint remained in his now strengthened role of chief of design and construction, with his long time deputy William G. (“Bill”) Carnes serving as his chief landscape architect, as he had since 1937.¹⁷⁷ All of these men—and at the time the Park Service still discriminated against

Pocantico Hills).

¹⁷⁷ Hammons, “A Brief Organizational History,” 3.

women designers—had long careers as Park Service professionals.¹⁷⁸ Most of them had worked for Wirth or Vint since the 1930s, when so many young landscape architects and architects had come to work for the agency. Because of the importance of planning and design within the Park Service throughout this period, many had also moved into administrative positions. Red Hill, Edward Zimmer, and Harvey Cornell, for example, had all been assistant regional directors in San Francisco, Richmond, and Santa Fe, respectively, before taking their assignments in the WODC and EODC.¹⁷⁹ Wirth surrounded himself with experienced associates in Washington, as well. Agency historian Russ Olsen observes that Wirth's "cabinet" in Washington in the 1950s consisted mostly of people who had worked in his "CCC organization" during the 1930s, and that Mission 66 has often been characterized as "the completion of Mr. Wirth's CCC program for the Service that was interrupted by World War II."¹⁸⁰

The whole tenor of Mission 66—a sudden mobilization to address a national crisis—must have recalled the spring of 1933, when many of the same people had rapidly implemented emergency spending programs. This is certainly how many of the employees and officials at the Park Service saw it at the time, and they described a similar sense of purpose and excitement. But in other ways, the spring of 1955 could not have differed more from that of 1933. A popular Republican president now watched over a rapidly expanding economy. For many Americans, twenty years of hard work and sacrifice were giving way to unprecedented material comfort and security, new houses, new cars, and growing families. In these ways the period suggested the 1920s more than the 1930s, and Mission 66 reflected this difference. Congress might finally be in a mood to appropriate money for parks, for example, but no one was even intimating that the CCC should be revived. Without the CCC (or an equivalent) there could be no park planning or development of comparable breadth and ambition. The CCC put hundreds of thousands of young men to work building national, state, and municipal parks. Hundreds of leading professionals joined the effort in supervisory roles. Without the CCC and the rest of the New Deal, Mission 66 could never match what the Park Service accomplished

¹⁷⁸ Laura Wilson became the first woman to work as a landscape architect for the Park Service in 1957. Mission 66 helped break down some of the barriers for women in the agency, but only because the greatly increased amount of work led to more open positions. There was no official policy at the time to integrate women into the professional ranks, and in fact women faced significant obstacles at the Park Service, as they did in the design professions elsewhere. On the subject of women designers at the Park Service, see Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 172-175.

¹⁷⁹ Tolson, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials*, 19, 32, 37.

in the 1930s. There would be no significant state park dimension to Mission 66, for example, nor partnerships with other federal agencies, other than existing relationships with the Bureau of Public Roads, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Neither did the Park Service have the bureaucratic support of the National Resources Planning Board or other New Deal national planning efforts. The New Deal had mobilized the entire federal government in a coordinated campaign of conservation programs. In 1955 the Park Service would have to rely on its own human and fiscal resources for putting Mission 66 into the context of a national plan for the use of public lands. The agency's role in this regard continued to be defined by the 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act. The overall Mission 66 program was never affirmed by new legislation that would have redefined mandates for the agency or endorsed the Mission 66 program specifically.

8.3 Mission 66 Gets Underway

In his memoirs, Wirth describes the specific ideas and events that precipitated the rapid organization of his Mission 66 proposal. His own account of events is actually based on a history written in 1958 by agency historian Roy E. Appleman, which was based in large part on interviews with Wirth in 1956 as well as Appleman's personal experience.¹⁸¹ According to Wirth (and Appleman), one weekend in February the director sat at his home in Maryland considering the reluctance of Congress to increase park appropriations since 1945. Congress had supported the Bureau of Public Roads, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Army Corps of Engineers with multi-year authorizations for hundreds of millions of dollars that allowed these agencies to efficiently complete massive public works. Capital expenditures for national parks, meanwhile, were inadequate and fluctuated from year to year, making it difficult to plan large projects over extended periods. Wirth struggled with how to present the redevelopment of the national park system to Congress on the same terms, as a national priority requiring a long term,

¹⁸⁰ Olsen, *Organizational Structures of the National Park Service*, 19.

¹⁸¹ Roy E. Appleman, "A History of the National Park Service Mission 66 Program," unpublished report, 1958 (National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Centre). Appleman, a member of the team planning Mission 66, explains that his history was based almost entirely on written notes that he took continuously: "[I] kept an informal diary...[and] made notes at the time discussions were in progress and often took down literally verbatim the words spoken....Almost nothing presented herein is based on unsupported memory" (p. 10). Taking into account his obvious point of view, the account provides an excellent summary by a professional historian who was also a participant in the events described. Wirth relied heavily on the account when writing his memoirs.

major commitment of funds rather than the minimal and uncertain appropriations that allowed only a “patch on patch” approach to modernizing park facilities.¹⁸²

Wirth does not mention Lucius Clay’s interstate highway proposal that had been published and submitted to Congress a month earlier. But while asking himself what a member of Congress would “want to hear,” he apparently experienced an epiphany: the modernization of the national park system could indeed be presented as a ten-year program, requiring extensive coordination and planning nationwide, and achieved within one overall budget estimate. Wirth would present Congress with a total figure and a schedule for the entire job. He could argue that long term, coordinated planning was necessary—just as it was to build highways and dams—in order to let larger contracts, benefit from economies of scale, and minimize the overall disturbance to parks and visitors by completing the work quickly. The alternative was to limp along with annual appropriations that allowed only incremental, endless repairs to facilities that were not worth the investment, because they would never be adequate for the numbers of people trying to use them.

This was the essence of “MISSION 66” (often all in capitals), a name Wirth hoped captured the urgency of the situation and evoked the wartime zeal of a “mission.” Ten years was, he felt, the right balance between unacceptably short term planning, and going too far into the uncertainties of the future. Intensely aware of the tradition of his agency, Wirth also feared that under his administration the Park Service would fail to measure up to its own history. In the 1920s Mather and Albright had forged a powerful identity for the agency while developing a national park system that was admired all over the world. Thirty years later, Wirth knew that his Park Service was faced with challenges—and opportunities—just as great. By timing Mission 66 to be completed in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the Park Service in 1966, he reminded himself and everyone else that living up to that legacy would require dedication, hard work, and equally successful responses to the new generation of problems besetting the park system.¹⁸³

From the moment he was taken with his idea, Wirth moved with single minded alacrity. That Monday morning, February 8, when he called the regular “squad meeting” of his assistant directors, division chiefs, and other principal advisors, he announced that

¹⁸² Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 237-239; Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 4-5.

¹⁸³ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 238-239.

business as usual would end immediately in the Washington Office. A new working group would be formed to begin working on details and estimates for the ten-year program to modernize and expand the park system. The conference room they were meeting in, Room 3100 adjacent to the director's office (in the Interior Building in Washington), would be given over to the group, who would be relieved of all other duties. By the end of the meeting, the squad had agreed on the individuals to be assigned to this "working staff" (later described as the "working committee") as well as the makeup of a "steering committee," made up mostly of the supervisors of those in the first group (fig. 24). Wirth, as his choice of rooms for the project made clear, would maintain close control and daily participation in every aspect of the plan. A strong administrator known for his direct style, Wirth did not lightly tolerate perceived incompetence or lack of enthusiasm; he would personally assure his mission stayed on its demanding course.¹⁸⁴

The working committee, most of whom had not been present that morning, were quickly informed of their new assignments. Together with the steering committee and the assistant directors, they met in the same conference room with Wirth that afternoon. Wirth now expounded on his goals at length, and laid out the arguments for immediate action. Most of these must have been familiar to everyone in the room. The parks were being "loved to death" and the public and popular media had been calling for action for years. Budgets had stagnated at a level that had served 21 million visits annually, while in 1954 there had been 46 million visits recorded. The Park Service faced nothing less than "the destruction...of what it is charged with saving." The task was to "secure a reasonable protection of the parks and yet provide for increased public use in such a way as to not wear them out." Wirth charged the group to elaborate a "reasoned objective" for Mission 66, and to delineate a program to accomplish that objective. The solution "would not be in the books and in regulations" and might not be possible within the terms of existing legislation; but he wanted answers, regardless of what the group determined would be necessary to implement them. According to Roy Appleman, Wirth used the analogy of a poker game, suggesting that the Park Service had been "called." They needed to show their cards, and Wirth wanted it to be "a good hand." The Bureau of Public Roads had been planning since at least 1944 for its plan for a modern system of interstate highways. Wirth gave his working group eight months to have their proposal ready. He planned to present it at the General Service Conference of national park

¹⁸⁴ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 239; Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 7-8.

superintendents scheduled for that September in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.¹⁸⁵

Wirth successfully imbued his staff with enthusiasm for their task of rapidly assembling and analyzing data, cost estimates, policy guidelines, and other features of what would be, eight months later, the Mission 66 proposal. The working staff felt they were about to make history, and the excitement was infectious, quickly moving to park superintendents, field personnel, and eventually Interior officials and members of Congress. The two most important staff members working under Wirth during the eight-month effort were the chair of the steering committee, Lemuel A. ("Lon") Garrison, and the chairman of the working committee, Bill Carnes.¹⁸⁶ Lon Garrison, a former ranger at Sequoia and Yosemite, and former superintendent of Hopewell Village and Big Bend, had just moved to Washington to take the new position of chief of the "conservation and protection branch," making him the agency's "chief ranger." Garrison's field background and personal style appealed to Wirth, who had brought him to Washington for other purposes, but now would rely on him as his most trusted lieutenant guiding the early stages of Mission 66. Garrison was only four years younger than Wirth, but in his memoirs suggests he aspired to play the role of Albright to Wirth's Mather, as together they worked to "dream up a contemporary National Park Service." After two years in Washington, Garrison felt the Mission 66 steering committee, by now renamed the "advisory committee," had done its work. Following in Albright's footsteps, he accepted the position of Yellowstone superintendent. But just as Albright had in the 1920s, he maintained close contact with the Washington Office, where he was considered a potential successor as director.¹⁸⁷

Garrison (fig. 25) was an interesting choice to head the Mission 66 steering committee, since as "chief ranger" he had impressive management experience, but little design or planning background. Most of the other members of the steering committee had counterparts whom they supervised on the working committee. The chairman of the working committee was Bill Carnes, whom Vint had supervised as his chief landscape architect since 1937. One might have expected Vint, as the chief of design and

¹⁸⁵ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 8-10.

¹⁸⁶ The other members of the steering committee were: Thomas C. Vint, Harry Langley, John E. Doerr, Donald E. Lee, Keith Neilson, and Jackson Price. The other members of the working committee were Harold G. Smith, Robert M. Coates, Howard R. Stagner, Jack B. Dodd, Roy E. Appleman, and Raymond L. Freeman. Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 7.

construction, therefore to be the chairman of the steering committee. Mission 66 was, after all, mainly a design and construction program. The choice of Vint's protégé as the head of the working committee, on the one hand, did confirm Vint's continued influence. But on the other hand, Carnes's reassignment also deprived Vint of the services of his closest ally and associate, who had for decades handled the paperwork and bureaucratic functions Vint eschewed. Vint had always been a planner and designer more than a manager at heart, and depended on Carnes as an assistant. As the head of the Mission 66 working committee, however, Carnes now assisted Wirth and Garrison, leaving Vint without his support. Vint remained in his position and exerted great influence on planning and design policy at this important time. Mission 66, however, was Conrad Wirth's program, and the director decided from the beginning not to put Vint in a position where he would share credit for the overall vision. Wirth later wrote that Carnes, because of his long association with Vint and his park planning methods, was "the logical chairman for the task force." Vint contributed, but less directly, as one of the steering committee members.¹⁸⁸

8.4 Initial Guiding Concepts

By the end of the first week of planning Mission 66, the working committee prepared a memorandum signed by Wirth to be distributed throughout the Park Service. The "goal to which this Mission is directed," Wirth informed the field, was "nothing new; it was plainly stated in the Act of 1916 establishing the National Park Service." Those concepts were "as sound today as they were in 1916." Wirth decided that the essence of the problem was to "meet fully the responsibilities implicit in those concepts" and "to produce a comprehensive and integrated program of use and protection that is in harmony with the obligations of the National Park Service under the Act of 1916." All Park Service personnel were urged to send in "suggestions" directly to Lon Garrison, "particularly on the controversial subject of possible controls on overuse of park areas." The program was being initiated immediately, Wirth informed his employees, because of "the urgency of the project," and suggestions were to be sent in by March 10. The

¹⁸⁷ Lemuel A. Garrison, *The Making of a Ranger: Forty Years With the National Parks* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1983), 256-267.

¹⁸⁸ Conrad L. Wirth "The History and Concept of the Master Plan," n.d. [ca. 1975] (Box 28, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre). For Bill Carnes's ideas on master planning (which closely reiterate Vint's), see William G. Carnes, "Landscape Architecture in the National (cont.)

Mission 66 planners were charged with “the development of a dynamic program,” he added, for the approval of Secretary McKay and the Bureau of the Budget and Congress in time to affect appropriations for fiscal year 1957.¹⁸⁹

Wirth’s belief in the continued validity of the concepts in the 1916 legislation would remain the ideological bedrock of Mission 66 until Wirth’s retirement in 1964. From the outset, the organizers of the Mission 66 program found their most fundamental justifications in existing prewar legislation and policy. The working committee spent its first weeks researching historical documents, including the 1872 Yellowstone Act, the 1906 Antiquities Act, the 1916 National Park Service Act, the 1918 “Lane Letter,” the 1933 executive reorganization, the 1935 Historic Sites Act, and of course the 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act.¹⁹⁰ Wirth would repeatedly refer back to the 1916 act that established the Park Service, in particular, as the fundamental mandate of Mission 66. Wirth felt secure in his interpretation of that legislation in part because of his close friendship and professional association with its author, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. “The fundamental purpose” of the parks, Olmsted wrote in 1916, was “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹⁹¹ This language clearly was influenced by the text of his father’s 1865 Yosemite report, which stated that “the duty of preservation is the first,” since “for the millions who are hereafter to benefit” preservation of the landscape was obviously necessary. “Next to this” duty, the elder Olmsted continued, “is that of... aiding to make... [Yosemite Valley] available as soon and as generally as may

Park Service: Its Contribution to Preservation and Development,” *Landscape Architecture* 41, no. 4 (July 1951): 145-150.

¹⁸⁹ “Informational Memorandum No. 1, Mission 66,” February 18, 1955 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). The seven Mission 66 informational memoranda released by Wirth between February 1955 and November 1956 amount to a manual for planning procedures. The documents are available at the National Park Service’s Harper’s Ferry Centre Archive, as well as the Yellowstone National Park Archives, and the Conrad L. Wirth Collection, American Heritage Centre, University of Wyoming.

¹⁹⁰ All of these documents are collected and described in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994), 28-52, 135-136.

¹⁹¹ For the text of the act, see Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 46-47. The “Organic Act” for the National Park Service was drafted with the participation of Representative William Kent (California), Robert Sterling Yard, J. Horace McFarland, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Robert B. Marshall, and Horace M. Albright. Albright and McFarland both credited Olmsted with drafting this essential paragraph of the bill. See Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 78-79.

be economically practicable to those whom it is designed to benefit.”¹⁹² Wirth and Olmsted, Jr., both understood that the duty of preservation came first, since without it there would be nothing to enjoy. At the same time, landscape preservation was justified in terms of public enjoyment. Preservation without public enjoyment, as Olmsted, Jr., reminded Wirth in 1949, was not what public parks—at least those described and developed by the two men’s fathers—were intended to achieve.

The second most important policy document for Wirth was almost as old. In 1918 Horace Albright drafted a letter for the signature of then Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane describing policies and priorities for the new National Park Service. The essence of Albright’s letter were in three points: first, the parks must be maintained “in an unimpaired form for the use of future generations” as well the present one; second, they were “set apart for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people”; and third, that national, not local, interests must dictate all decisions concerning their management. Albright summarized management principles in a series of concise directives: to further the expansion and enjoyment of the park system, the letter advised, “You should diligently extend and use the splendid cooperation...among chambers of commerce, tourist bureaus, and automobile highway associations”; in planning additions to the system, “You should seek to find scenery of supreme and distinctive quality.”¹⁹³ In March 1955, Wirth distributed the “Lane Letter” in another agency-wide informational memorandum. “With few exceptions,” he wrote in the memorandum, the letter “could have been written yesterday.”¹⁹⁴ Later critics would claim that the Mission 66 program moved too far away from earlier national park policy or tradition; in fact from the beginning the program was completely rooted in the Progressive Era ideology—and in even earlier Olmstedian theory—which had served the agency so well to that point.

By the end of February, the Mission 66 working committee had asked every administrative department of the agency to submit a “recommended program” for their area of responsibility and was preparing surveys to be sent to every park in the system.

¹⁹² For the text of the report, see Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 12-27. Key portions of the 1865 report, which had been fragmented and all but lost, were nevertheless available to Olmsted, Jr., who began officially editing his father’s papers at about the time he was writing the National Park Service legislation. We know he read and appreciated portions of the 1865 report because he quoted from them in a 1914 article (Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., “Hetch-Hetchy,” *Landscape Architecture* 4, no. 2, 37-46). The complete report was reassembled from these fragments by the elder Olmsted’s biographer, Laura Wood Roper, in 1952 (*Landscape Architecture* 43, no. 1, 14-25).

¹⁹³ For the text of the letter, see Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 48-52.

¹⁹⁴ “Informational Memorandum, Statement of National Park Policy—1918,” March 21 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

Garrison and Carnes interviewed dozens of members of the Washington Office soliciting any and all opinions. Few experts outside the Park Service were consulted during these weeks. Within the agency, however, the planners suspended the usual protocols and requested employees at every level to address comments and suggestions directly to them. The lack of an official outreach to private conservation groups and park concessioners, in particular, would soon prove to be a major strategic error. But for the time being great enthusiasm was generated among Park Service office staff and field personnel, many of whom participated directly or indirectly to the effort. For his part, Wirth opened the door to his adjacent office many times a day, and maintained personal oversight of the entire endeavour.¹⁹⁵

On March 17 Wirth and his planners issued a second agency memorandum on Mission 66 “policies and procedures.” It had been a busy month and the memorandum, with attachments, ran more than ten pages. The “steering committee and staff,” Wirth announced, had three basic instructions for those who would be participating in Mission 66 planning: “Disregard precedents....Be imaginative....[and] Bring up something effective in achieving the twin objectives of protection and optimum use.” If Wirth venerated the documents that described the original mandate of his agency, he also announced that he would be completely open to finding new ways to achieve that mandate. “The lid is off,” he declared, “only by giving full play to the imagination will we find solutions that will meet the problems of continuously increasing use of the parks by the American people.” All Park Service personnel were again asked to participate and send in suggestions; some would be asked to come to Washington to give advice.

The “policies and practices as they might apply to a park” described in an attachment to the memorandum were just as radical in their tone. The policies perhaps also surprise today, considering the subsequent reputation of Mission 66 for “overdevelopment.” The first policy described, for example, was that travel to national parks “should not be actively encouraged,” and that an “optimum visitor load” for both the present and future should be determined. Wirth and his planners then suggested four policies on “public use,” all of which advocated the removal of development from within park boundaries, or at least from overcrowded and sensitive areas. They sought new strategies for relocating hotels and administrative facilities from “precious” areas—such

¹⁹⁵ “Informational Memorandum No. 1, Mission 66,” February 18, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 241-243; Appleman, *A History of the Mission 66 Program*, 9-18.

as the rims of scenic canyons or the edges of geyser basins—to less sensitive sites. They noted that concessioners had sited many of these buildings before the Park Service was established in 1916, and since then the agency had made only partial progress in relocating or mitigating the effects of such development. At Sequoia, for example, there was a moratorium on any more cabins in the Giant Forest, and at Yellowstone plans were underway to move the existing development away from the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. But because of increased public use, the parks were now at a turning point. Further expansion of older developed areas would cause far greater damage and overcrowding around major park attractions and destinations. An unambiguous new policy was required: “It is imperative that the Service establish a guiding policy for correcting such existing encroachments, and preventing others in the future.” Although “in certain areas the Service is on record” regarding the necessity of moving development to “less ‘precious’ and more advantageous locations,” both “the Service and the concessioner continue to add developments in these locations to meet growing needs.” In some cases even safety hazards from rock slides and floods had been ignored (for example at Yosemite and Mount Rainier), and developed areas had been expanded as managers were forced into “compromising with a bad situation” while trying to meet the needs of visitors. But the Mission 66 planners were in no mood for further compromise. “There must be a definite policy...of ‘getting out of the precious areas in the parks and on to the lesser areas,’ both as to administrative facilities and visitor accommodations.” What was more, “the eventual removal of overnight facilities from the parks, or from the most ‘precious’ areas therein, should be considered.” Older lodge facilities, even such landmarks as the Old Faithful Inn and the Paradise Inn, might be demolished and replaced with lodging in less sensitive areas, or outside park boundaries altogether. Better roads and faster cars made it desirable, where practicable, to relocate and concentrate overnight and administrative facilities to new “town sites” outside parks. These new “communities” would include residential districts for park employees, who would therefore have to commute to work in the parks (although their families would have easier access to schools and other services). Finally, new plans for national parks would have to consider “completely revamping park transportation systems,” particularly to increase the efficient use of buses.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ “Informational Memorandum No. 2, Mission 66—Policies and Procedures,” March 17, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

A tremendous amount of new development would be required to achieve the kinds of goals that the Mission 66 planners instructed regional staff and superintendents to consider. Their instructions also implied the demolition of many historic hotels and park structures of all types. New strategies—and a huge amount of money—would be needed to reduce the impacts of higher numbers of visitors. If the idea of allowing essentially unrestricted numbers of people to come and enjoy the parks were to survive, a new set of priorities would need to guide revised master plans for every unit in the system. A “questionnaire” directed to park superintendents was therefore also attached to the March 17 memorandum. The Mission 66 planners wanted to know first “what problems exist or are anticipated regarding the protection of natural conditions or in regard to animal populations, plant associations, forestry management, historic or scientific values, etc.?” They asked the superintendents to estimate “visitor volume” both present and projected for 1966. They wanted to know which management problems derived from “continuously increasing visitation,” and how those problems impaired both “park values” and the “opportunity for proper park use by the public.” Park managers were asked to assess and analyze their situations, using existing master plans as a starting point, but remembering that those plans “have been governed by existing laws, regulations, land holdings, or franchises more limiting in scope than is the study now in progress under Mission 66.” “We must face the fact,” Wirth continued, “that many park installations still in use are based on a stagecoach economy and travel patterns.”¹⁹⁷

From the very start, Wirth described Mission 66 as an initiative for developing completely revised park master plans that would respond to the social, technological, and geographical trends of postwar American society. Armed with only the most rudimentary estimates for the costs of modernizing the entire park system, Wirth was also preparing to go directly to Congress for what he already knew would be the \$500 million to \$1 billion cost of implementing the entire program. Mission 66 was conceived entirely “in house,” by the Park Service, with very little significant participation by congressional staff, or by the agency’s most vital private partners, conservation groups and park concessioners. Wirth and his staff obviously felt they could invent a new approach to administering the national park system without much outside help. They could argue, with some basis, that no one had as much experience in dealing with the conflicting agendas of concessioners, conservationists, and the diverse, always demanding public. While Wirth recognized the

¹⁹⁷ “Informational Memorandum No. 2, Mission 66—Policies and Procedures,” March 17, 1955, (Box (cont.))

eventual need for “better understanding, cooperation, and support of local and national civic and conservation groups” (the only mention made of outside groups at this point), for now he would look to the expertise within his own ranks.

8.5 Vint's Influence on Early Policy

Early Mission 66 policy statements reflected the contemporary sentiments of the most experienced park planner of all, Thomas Vint. Still the active and revered director of design and construction, Vint had invented the “master planning” procedures that had been the heart of Park Service development policies since the 1920s. During his long career with the Park Service he had worked closely with Mather, Albright, and Olmsted, Jr., and he had personally trained (or “raised” as he sometimes put it) many of the senior planners and landscape architects in the agency.¹⁹⁸ Vint and Wirth had a long and complex relationship. The two landscape architects were close friends, and they each had been given great responsibilities at the Park Service early in their careers. They held one another in high esteem and in many ways complemented one another. In the 1930s they had very separate roles in the Park Service, for example, with Wirth in charge of his state park CCC organization and Vint overseeing planning and design within the national parks. In the 1940s Vint had little to do with the “river basin studies” and recreation area plans that occupied Wirth. Both men were popular figures within the agency, but they had very different personalities. Vint was gregarious and informal in his approach to management, and he inspired tremendous loyalty and affection among his staff. Vint was a designer rather than an administrator at heart (although Wirth nevertheless described him as “canny” in his bureaucratic style). When he and Wirth disagreed over particulars of a park master plan, Vint was reputed to agree to the changes, and then reverse them after Wirth left the room.¹⁹⁹ Vint took great pride in his master plans, and he also knew his boss was busy with many other matters more pressing than such details. For his part, Wirth was a former military school cadet, who in college enjoyed football and fraternal organizations more than his design apprenticeship. A masterful bureaucrat, he oversaw

A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

¹⁹⁸ For Vint's life and the significance of his prewar work with the National Park Service, see Linda Flint McClelland, “Vint, Thomas Chalmers,” in Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 413-416; Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 189-195.

¹⁹⁹ Wirth much later acknowledged these observations in a conversation with Charles Peterson. Charles E. Peterson, “Memo for VINT File,” January 9, 1981, (Thomas C. Vint Collection, Papers of Charles E. Peterson).

every detail of park operations with organized rigor. He was known for his ability to control a meeting and to quickly dispatch with any perceived incompetence or other distraction.

Wirth and Vint's professional relationship continued over three decades and was a productive partnership. They were always warm and friendly in their official duties, and they were even close friends; but there remained some measure of competition between them. They were both landscape architects with strong opinions on the details of planning and architectural design in the parks. In the 1930s their respective places in organizational charts—with separate responsibilities defined—apparently mitigated any tension between the older designer and the ambitious young administrator. As director, Wirth relied on Vint and enhanced his position through the 1954 reorganization of planning and design staff. In 1955, however, Wirth limited Vint's direct involvement in Mission 66, preferring to rely on younger men with whom he had less potentially competitive relationships. Considering Vint's reputation within the Park Service, it would have been difficult for Wirth to claim Mission 66 as his own if he had put Vint, not Garrison, in charge of the steering committee.

The exact nature of Vint's early contributions to Mission 66 planning must be surmised. But with his trusted aide, Bill Carnes, heading the working committee, Vint clearly had a hand—directly or indirectly—in drafting the “policies and practices” issued in 1955. The idea of removing development to “gateway communities” outside parks, for example, had been advocated by Vint and members of his staff for more than ten years, ever since the postwar situation of the parks had begun to receive serious consideration. Vint understood that improved park roads, together with faster and more reliable cars, often eliminated the need for overnight accommodations in parks. Visitors could make a day trip, in many cases, leaving and returning home the same day. They could also stay in hotels and motels that were outside the parks, but within practical driving distance from main park destinations.

In a memorandum to Newton Drury in 1945 on the subject of “development problems” at Yosemite, Vint insisted that it was time to “re-appraise” the agency's approach to planning and to “move some activities entirely out of the park.” If Drury really wanted to reduce the presence of development on the floor of Yosemite Valley, Vint advised, the “convenience of the road system” that made it possible for so many people to visit the valley also made it possible to move housing, maintenance, and concessioner facilities out of the park altogether. Vint pointed out that a whole program

of development—including an expanded administration building, a new Yosemite Lodge, housing, and maintenance areas—was already considered necessary by the Park Service and the concessioner. In what became known at the time as the “Vint Plan,” he suggested that none of the new buildings should be sited in Yosemite Valley itself, but be relocated to sites outside the park and to Big Meadows and Wawona, areas within the park but away from the crowded valley.²⁰⁰ In 1947 Vint pressed his points to Drury, insisting that conditions at Yosemite were “as near to a clear slate” as would ever be likely to occur again, and that the “next step” would “determine the course to be followed for a long term of years.” He knew that once a new commitment of capital investment was made, it would be many years—if ever—before they had a similar opportunity to reconceive the public’s experience of Yosemite Valley. The Park Service could follow “Plan A” in the valley, he told Drury, and further expand and rebuild existing development, or it could follow what Vint called “Plan B,” and build a new Yosemite Lodge in Wawona rather than in the valley, along with a new park administrative centre either in Wawona or Fresno. He knew these would not be “popular” ideas, but he also felt the time was drawing near when the Park Service would have to decide whether to further accommodate increasingly destructive compromises, or institute new planning policy that reflected the postwar social and geographic contexts of the national parks. “If you decide to rebuild Yosemite Lodge in the Valley,” Vint warned Drury, “you will be following Plan A,” and will continue to “drift in one direction, while hoping...to change to the other.”²⁰¹ In 1949 Drury nevertheless approved building a new lodge in the valley, although a lack of construction funds delayed the project. Mission 66, however, soon revived these ruminations on park development policy for Vint and his colleagues.

Similar scenarios were taking place in many other parks in the 1940s, but Yosemite Valley held great significance for Vint, as it did for many others concerned with national park preservation. Vint began his Park Service career at Yosemite in 1922, and remained particularly interested in the park while he headed the San Francisco

²⁰⁰ In a contemporary memorandum on Kings Canyon National Park, Vint warned against any buildings at all in Kings Canyon, because once the agency followed the “same course as in the past,” they would eventually “have a duplicate Yosemite problem in the Kings Canyon.” Thomas C. Vint, “A Brief Discussion of Development Problems in Yosemite National Park,” April 14, 1945; “A Brief Discussion of Development Problems in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks,” April 14, 1945 (Personal Papers of Newton B. Drury, Entry 19, RG 79, National Archives).

²⁰¹ Thomas C. Vint to Newton B. Drury, November 10, 1947, memorandum (Personal Papers of Newton B. Drury, Entry 19, RG 79, National Archives). Vint was supported in the particulars of suggestions for Yosemite in 1947 by park landscape architect, Alfred C. Kuehl, another professional recruited in the 1930s, who previously worked at Grand Canyon.

“Western Field Office” of design and construction staff between 1927 and 1933. Vint had always worked closely with the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, formed in 1928 with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., as its first chairman. While his ideas for removing development from the valley might have seemed radical to some in 1945, they were actually a reiteration of a much older vision for the valley, described by the elder Frederick Law Olmsted in 1865. Even then, Olmsted knew then that the number of visitors to the valley would “within a century” be in the “millions,” and in his 1865 plan for the valley he therefore suggested minimal development: essentially a one-way loop road, trails, bathrooms, and campgrounds that would serve as the only overnight accommodations.²⁰² Olmsted, Jr., had continued his father’s interest in Yosemite, and as an influential member of the park’s Board of Expert Advisors was an important supporter of Vint. Together they had considered such issues as the construction of the new Wawona Road (begun in 1930), and the proposed “ropeway” (or cable car) from the Happy Isles area of the valley to Glacier Point. While they considered road construction an appropriate and desirable modernization of the park landscape, they fought and defeated what they considered the visual intrusion of prominent “mechanical features” such as the ropeway.²⁰³

Through his own work and his association with Olmsted, Jr., Vint was long versed in the preservation issues of Yosemite Valley. In 1945 he was not only advancing a radical, postwar vision for the management of the valley, he also was asserting the priorities of the oldest national park plan of all: the elder Olmsted’s 1865 plan. In March 1955, Wirth, Garrison, and Carnes made Vint’s postwar national park planning ideas the first policy framework for Mission 66. The new era of national park master planning was off to an optimistic start.

By that time, the Mission 66 planners had decided to begin a new model master plan for a park selected to be representative of many issues and management considerations. That park would not be Yosemite, which was too complex and unique to effectively serve the purpose. Wirth decided instead to make Mount Rainier National

²⁰² For the complete text of the Yosemite report, see Victoria Post Ranney, Gerard J. Rauluk, and Carolyn F. Hoffman, eds., *The California Frontier, 1863-1865. The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume V.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). 488-516.

²⁰³ While Vint did not write many long reports or explanations of his professional practice, in 1930 he did write a detailed justification for denying the ropeway project at Yosemite, because he knew the decision would set a precedent for similar “mechanical features in all parks,” which both he and Olmsted considered unacceptable visual intrusions. Thomas C. Vint, “Report on Yosemite Ropeway Application,” November 21, 1930, (Thomas C. Vint Collection, Papers of Charles E. Peterson).

Park the “pilot study” for Mission 66 planning. There were many reasons why Mount Rainier was the perfect vehicle to showcase their ideas for how each park should develop a new program of accelerated redevelopment or, as it was soon described, a “Mission 66 prospectus.” Larger parks had too many specific issues and interest groups to be instructive case studies. Mount Rainier was smaller and featured what the Mission 66 working committee described as “reasonably difficult problems, many of which would be typical of park problems in general.”²⁰⁴ The park contained a range of resources, including glaciers, mountains, forests, rivers, and of course superb scenery. Managers at Mount Rainier were also contending with a range of issues related to public use, including road construction, winter sports, and the renewal of concession contracts. Mount Rainier was the park where Mather had first demonstrated the benefits of his monopolistic concessioner contracts in 1915. It was where Vint had first developed national park master planning in the late 1920s. As it had for Vint in the 1920s, Mount Rainier could again serve as a model park, in which a revised form of national park master planning—the Mission 66 prospectus—could be demonstrated.

8.6 Pilot Prospectus for Mount Rainier

The condition of many of Mount Rainier’s public facilities in 1955 could be seen as an indictment of the consequences of Park Service policies up to that point. Mather’s organization of the Rainier National Park Company in 1915 had been held up as an example of how private concessioners could enhance the federal management of the parks. By 1946, however, Drury described a dismal situation, in which once admired rustic lodges, such as the Paradise Inn (1917), were now overcrowded and “obsolete.”²⁰⁵ The Rainier National Park Company had suffered through the Depression, and after the war its stockholders refused to invest new capital to expand and modernize their facilities. In 1952 Congress bought out the company’s interest in its buildings, and the Park Service contracted with them to run the hotels and restaurants. Many park administrators—even the conservative Albright—felt this type of arrangement would eventually be necessary in most parks, although in 1955 the publicly owned concession facilities at Mount Rainier were still the exception to the rule. But this was another reason the park would make an excellent demonstration project: Mission 66 planners would have a free hand in proposed dispositions of hotels and visitor facilities.

²⁰⁴ Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 18-19.

In 1955 Mount Rainier was already in the vanguard of several acrimonious policy debates with significance for the park system as a whole. Since even before World War II, skiers, local businessmen, and elected officials had been pressing the Park Service to develop the Paradise Valley area of the park into a commercial ski resort, complete with year round accommodations and ski lifts. In 1946 Vint produced a plan illustrating what replacing the Paradise Inn with a hotel designed for year round use might entail: a \$2 million dollar, massive concrete building with basement parking, 100 rooms, dormitories, dining rooms, and enough capacity to serve crowds visiting Paradise only for the day, as well as those staying at the hotel. Vint also observed that the year round operation of such a hotel would still not break even, and would have to be subsidized by the government. While dutifully producing schematic designs for a year round resort, Vint actually opposed the whole idea. For both Vint and Wirth, the prospect of permanent chair lift structures up the slopes of Mount Rainier, in particular, made a ski resort development utterly unacceptable. These were precisely the kind of “mechanical features” that had been proposed at Yosemite Valley and elsewhere. Expanding the winter use of parks was considered desirable in part as a means to “spread” park use seasonally and reduce summer crowding, and limited ski operations had been developed elsewhere, notably at Badger Pass in Yosemite. But permanent ski lift towers on the slopes of Mount Rainier could not be countenanced. As historian Theodore Catton relates, by 1948 Vint had objected to Wirth in writing, and by 1953 Wirth expressed his opposition to Secretary of the Interior McKay, effectively threatening to resign. McKay backed his Park Service director and the ski resort at Paradise was defeated, although the pressure to maintain year round visitor use there remained.²⁰⁶

The “pilot study” Wirth and his staff quickly assembled for Mount Rainier in 1955 further demonstrated that they were in no mood to compromise on the issue. The park’s superintendent, Preston P. Macy, came to Washington, DC, for a week in early April, and by April 11 the planners had what they considered the first complete Mission 66 prospectus. The twenty-page report featured the agency’s new arrowhead logo prominently, and was in 8 ½ by 11 inch format (fig. 26). Several diagrams and schematic renderings of proposed facilities were interspersed with brief descriptions of policies and proposed development and a one-page estimate of costs. Prewar master plans, which had

²⁰⁵ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1947 Annual Report*, 320-323.

²⁰⁶ Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 413-435.

been the result of years of effort not weeks, were typically thirty by forty inches and included detailed site plans, design renderings, and other studies at several scales. By comparison, the new prospectus was little more than an abbreviated summary; it described a radical plan of park redevelopment, nevertheless.

The prospectus planners began by attempting to estimate how many park visits there would be by 1966. Almost 800,000 had been recorded in 1954, up from 35,000 in 1917 when the Paradise Inn opened, and 200,000 in 1927 when Vint was devising the first master plan. The planners' projection that within ten years yearly travel would "exceed one million" was conservative.²⁰⁷ The implications of this rise in the number of park visitors, nevertheless, dominated all other considerations. In his forward to the prospectus, Wirth stated that, above all, "provision must be made to relieve impact on fragile areas by this ever increasing visitor use." Throughout the document the basic strategy for achieving this end was stated repeatedly: "Except for camping, Mount Rainier will be a day-use park....With modern means of transportation it is no longer necessary that visitors remain in the park overnight to enjoy its scenic attractions and inspirational values. Areas immediately outside the park are available for the full development of visitor housing by private enterprise." Not even "trailer villages" were to be provided, because these were "another form of overnight housing," rather than true camping, and so should also be relegated to neighbouring towns. "Headquarters facilities" and staff housing were also to be moved to "more advantageous locations outside the park."²⁰⁸ The 1955 Mount Rainier prospectus, the new model for Mission 66 planning, was following what Vint might have called "Plan B," business not as usual.²⁰⁹

There were many implications for the conceptual transformation of national parks into strictly a day use and overnight camping destination. Eliminating park hotel concessions, for example, could only begin when existing contracts expired. Even then, concessioners could be expected to rally opposition, particularly in parks where their "possessory interest" had not already been purchased. This was a principal reason why Wirth conducted early Mission 66 planning within what he liked to call "the Park Service

²⁰⁷ "1966 Prospectus, Mount Rainier National Park," cover memorandum dated June 9, 1955 (Entry A1-1, RG 79, National Archives). There were more than 1,700,000 visitors to Mount Rainier in 1966.

²⁰⁸ In this case, the park landscape architect, Ernest A. Davidson, had been advocating the removal of administrative facilities from the park since at least 1943. Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park*, 496. Davidson worked for Vint from 1926 until his death in 1944, mostly as the Mount Rainier landscape architect. Vint particularly appreciated not only his design work, but his preservation sensibilities as well. See Carr, *Wilderness By Design*, 231.

family,” which is to say in secret, at least as far as outside groups and the general public were concerned. The Mount Rainier prospectus also emphasized the idea of encouraging “private enterprise to develop overnight visitor housing outside the park, by eliminating such facilities within the park.” Wirth was looking to get his agency out of the hotel business altogether at Mount Rainier, and he hoped to win political support for the plan by implying that park concessions were suppressing economic opportunities in gateway communities. The 1955 prospectus called for operation of the Mount Rainier hotels at Longmire, Paradise, and Ohanapecosh to be discontinued at the expiration of their contracts. The buildings would presumably then be removed. The “lack of such competition within the park,” the planners asserted, would “hasten the trend” they had already observed of new tourist development in nearby towns, and in this way meet the need for overnight accommodations.

The Mount Rainier prospectus also delineated a program of redevelopment that would structure a new relationship between the park and its public. “Automobile campgrounds” would be removed from “fragile areas” at high elevations (the Paradise and Yakima Park areas), but new campgrounds at lower elevations would be built for significantly larger numbers of cars and campers. Day use areas (picnic grounds) would be retained, improved, and expanded in size and number. At Paradise and Cayuse Pass, Wirth would bow to the desire for winter access, but without any overnight facilities. “Ski tows” would be provided, but only of a type that could be completely removed in summer. The prospectus also featured a new system of “park interpretive centres,” including a central “day-use building” at Paradise that would replace the Paradise Inn and the Paradise Lodge. Each “interpretive centre” would have a theme, for example “glacial geology, flower and animal life” at the Paradise centre. At Longmire, a “public use building with auditorium” would replace the hotel there and serve as the main contact point, “strategically located on roads leading to nearby overnight accommodations outside the park.”²¹⁰ The Mission 66 prospectus for Mount Rainier acknowledged the changing social and geographic context of the park. Mount Rainier, like Rocky Mountain, Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah, and others, had always had large numbers of visitors on day trips who drove from relatively nearby cities. Interstate

²⁰⁹ “1966 Prospectus, Mount Rainier National Park,” cover memorandum dated June 9, 1955 (Entry A1-1, RG 79, National Archives).

²¹⁰ “1966 Prospectus, Mount Rainier National Park,” cover memorandum dated June 9, 1955 (Entry A1-1, RG 79, National Archives).

highway construction, more people in cars, and “suburbanization” around Puget Sound cities guaranteed that this trend would only increase.

In this initial planning effort, a basic premise of the entire Mission 66 program immediately emerged: the impact of larger number of visitors in cars could be absorbed without “impairment” of the parks if the patterns and types of public use were rearranged. Overnight lodge visitors, for example, needed to become day use visitors. In other cases, lodges and campgrounds only needed to be relocated and redesigned rather than removed from the park; but they definitely needed to be sited away from overcrowded “precious” areas. The “difficult problem” of eliminating overnight accommodations in parks also immediately arose as a central challenge. Wirth exhorted his planners to make bold changes, reminding them that he had recently (and temporarily, it turned out) decided not to provide overnight facilities in the master plan for Everglades National Park.²¹¹ Wirth and his planners knew that soon all national parks would become more like Mount Rainier, with greater numbers of more mobile, essentially day use visitors. They had already observed the increase in motels and other businesses outside the entrances of many parks, in what were now described as “gateway towns.” As these towns grew, they would provide the shops, housing, schools, and other amenities that both staff and visitors once expected “park villages” to provide.

The model Mission 66 prospectus differed profoundly from the earlier master plans Vint and his staff had devised for Mount Rainier and every other park in the system.²¹² Vint’s master plans had responded to the need to control the extent of park development—especially of new park roads—in the 1920s, when the first great wave of automotive tourism had arrived at many national parks. The plans often involved redeveloping and expanding earlier concessioner areas, which in many cases had been first established in close proximity to principal park destinations, such as the geyser basins of Yellowstone or the south rim of the Grand Canyon. Concessioners of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had located their businesses as closely as possible to important features, and eventually built their most memorable hotels there. The park villages Vint and his staff designed in the 1920s and 1930s typically did not reject the locations of existing park developed areas, but attempted to mitigate their presence even

²¹¹ Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 20.

²¹² Many of these master plans are conserved in the cartographic division of the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. For descriptions of the master planning process, see Thomas C. Vint, “National Park Service Master Plans,” in *Planning and Civic Comment* (Washington, DC: American Planning and Civic Association, 1946).

while expanding them. But even in cases where the locations of developed areas were having known deleterious effects on a park (such as the overnight cabins in Sequoia's Giant Forest) Vint could rarely propose relocating the development altogether.²¹³

Concessioners during this era were important partners who invested large amounts of capital in park facilities. As long as Mather and Albright embraced the concessioner partnership, it made little sense to recommend removing their improvements. Many of the hotels and other buildings in question had also been built relatively recently, and returns on initial investments were still being made.

By the late 1930s, however, Vint had grown increasingly dissatisfied with his own master planning policy. If ever larger numbers of visitors were to continue to be accommodated, the necessary expansions of park villages would make it impossible to prevent them from overrunning and destroying park landscapes.²¹⁴ Those policies had effectively responded to a previous generation of challenges, but by the end of World War II Vint was advocating a very different approach. By the postwar period, hotels built thirty or forty years earlier now required major rehabilitation, and demolition could be considered a reasonable—even desirable—alternative. A window of opportunity was opening, and Vint knew there would not be another for decades. Only at this point in the cycle of concessioner capital investment could the overall pattern of park development be seriously reorganized.

The Mission 66 prospectus for Mount Rainier did suggest the redevelopment of some of the same developed areas (such as Paradise and Longmire) that concessioners had established at the beginning of the century. The existing road corridors would also continue to determine the basic pattern of public access. But the new iteration of national park planning—Mission 66—would feature faster roads, larger campgrounds, “interpretive centres,” and enlarged gateway communities. This new arrangement would

²¹³ Yosemite Village was one early “park village” that replaced the old, more ramshackle town in Yosemite Valley; in this case, however, the new village was only removed to the other side of the Merced River, as part of the elimination of multiple concessioners to make way for Mather's chosen monopoly, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. The proposed relocation of Yellowstone's Canyon Village in the late 1930s was another important exception; the new Canyon Village was delayed, however, and in fact would end up becoming the first substantial accomplishment of the Mission 66 program.

²¹⁴ Vint's convictions in this regard were subsequently proven correct in cases where prewar park villages were expanded to meet postwar demand. At Yosemite Village, for example, the prewar village plan kept most buildings (except the Ahwahnee and the Yosemite Lodge) out of the park's main viewsheds and historic views. Postwar expansions of village facilities, however, created significant visual intrusions and impacts. This observation was proved through research and analysis done by landscape architect John Reynolds and Park Service general management planning staff in the 1970s. See: National Park Service, *Draft Environmental Statement: General Management Plan, Yosemite National Park, California* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1978).

allow for the demolition of the overnight accommodations and other buildings in the park villages. In larger or more remote parks, where overnight accommodations would still be needed, new lodges would be redesigned and relocated in areas where they could be more concentrated and would not damage or encroach on park scenery. The Mission 66 vision for national park planning indicated a genuinely new approach to accommodating the public. But the pilot Mission 66 prospectus for Mount Rainier also culminated the process that the prewar master plans had begun: it was the final step in modernizing the frontcountry landscape to allow convenient and unrestricted automotive tourism, while purportedly avoiding the “impairment” of park scenery and wildlife.

8.7 Other Pilot Prospectuses

Out of the experience of creating the Mount Rainier prospectus, the Mission 66 team developed a generalized procedure for how other Mission 66 prospectuses would update and transform national park master plans. The first task was to “determine and state the important park resources.” Following this inventory, planners were told to “fix a road and trail system” that would allow visitors to “see, experience, and enjoy the values to be derived from” the “important park resources” described at the beginning of the document. In the great majority of cases, such road and trail corridors already existed, but might require realignment, extension, or abbreviation. Then they should “determine what visitor facilities, other than roads and trails,” would be required in order to “provide a reasonable opportunity to enjoy the Park resources” and meet “administrative requirements...in terms of protecting [the park’s] resources and providing visitor services.” Finally they were to decide what land acquisition (boundary expansions or inholdings) should be recommended.²¹⁵ The very short prospectuses were to be based on an analysis of the park master plans that had preceded them; but they were not to be in any way restricted by those plans or the assumptions implicit in them. The pilot study for Mount Rainier made it clear that a new set of priorities were to be considered. It was an approach that retained much of the traditional ideology of the Park Service—access for public enjoyment—by radically altering the premises of how plans for that access and enjoyment should be made.

At a Park Service meeting that April in Shenandoah National Park, the Mount Rainier prospectus and the rest of the Mission 66 program were presented for the first

²¹⁵ Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 22.

time to the agency's four regional directors. Stripped of their regional design staff in 1954 and left out of Mission 66 planning in 1955, the regional directors were bound to have questions. Wirth, Garrison, and Carnes, made a full presentation of Mission 66 goals and policies and discussed the results of the questionnaires sent out to parks the previous month. While the regional directors expressed full support, they also asked that their offices be more fully informed and involved in plans. Garrison and Carnes went on the road that month to visit all four regional offices and the WODC and EODC to answer questions about the program and to meet with newly formed "Mission 66 committees" in each region. It was also agreed that further pilot studies should be done that would illustrate a "cross section" of management concerns and park types. Wirth and his planners chose six more parks: Yellowstone and Everglades national parks, Chaco Canyon and Fort Laramie national monuments, Shiloh National Military Park, and Adams National Historic Site. A seventh pilot study, for Mesa Verde National Park, was later added, and in this case the prospectus was to be prepared entirely by Region III staff in Santa Fe.

For the Mission 66 staff in Washington, work continued apace as the pilot study prospectuses were rapidly finished and further instructions were issued for regional offices and parks to prepare their own prospectuses for all the other parks in the system. On June 27, 1955, a third agency-wide informational memorandum reported on progress and gave a deadline. The Mount Rainier prospectus was considered "completed," and the other pilots were well advanced. "Additional precepts" for Mission 66 planning, and brochures filled with "pertinent facts" for the public were being written and designed. The goal remained to have the entire program outlined by that September. To accomplish this, Wirth insisted a Mission 66 prospectus would be "made by, or for, each area...*not later than July 20.*"²¹⁶ Parks with adequate staff would prepare them themselves. Others would rely on regional, WODC, and EODC staff. The "studies" were to begin immediately and submitted to Washington and the appropriate regional and design offices for review. Any comments from the regions had to be made in writing by July 31, or the Mission 66 staff in Washington would assume the prospectuses had been approved. Other instructions indicated the general prospectus outline. In a "narrative plan for protection, development, interpretation, and operation," superintendents were expected to make a statement of their park's "significance," inventory their "problems," record public

use “patterns,” and outline ideal interpretive, development, and operating plans. Superintendents were not to be limited by any “development requirements” their plans might incur, but they were to always remember foremost the “necessity of preserving park values” that might be destroyed by too much development. Once the prospectuses were approved, the Washington and regional offices were to coordinate the preparation of rough budget estimates.

A document titled “Principles Guiding Pilot Studies” was distributed as an attachment to the memorandum. The new principles indicated a change in emphasis from the initial planning guidelines distributed three months earlier. The first principle listed now was to secure “greater participation of private enterprise,” especially for providing overnight accommodations. Presumably this referred to private development in gateway towns, in addition to new concessioner investments in the parks. The second principle concerned “locating visitor accommodations” in attractive and accessible locations that would “not encroach on major park features,” a policy that obviously implied only relocating, not removing, park concessions. There was no mention of specifically converting parks to day use only; but new facilities should be “geared to meet conditions imposed by modern means of transportation, and modern leisure time habits.” The new principles also emphasized “spreading” park use seasonally, and from overcrowded areas to less visited ones. The principles also specifically cited the need for a “coordinated nation-wide recreation plan leading to a nation-wide system of recreation facilities,” the first time the Mission 66 planners had suggested how their work might be coordinated with other federal and land management agencies. But they did not suggest new legislation would be necessary, referring instead to the “intent” of the 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act. These “principles” issued in June were decidedly less radical in tone than the initial policies outlined in March. The reactions to Mission 66 had already begun to reshape the program, if still only subtly at this point.²¹⁷

The memorandum also included an indication of the considerable political excitement that Mission 66 had already generated in less than six months. “Word of the objectives and purposes of Mission 66 has reached high places,” Wirth intoned, and “the Service has been asked to present the subject to the President and his Cabinet.” Although

²¹⁶ Emphasis in original. “Informational Memorandum No. 3, Mission 66, Progress and Procedures,” June 27, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

²¹⁷ “Informational Memorandum No. 3, Mission 66, Progress and Procedures,” June 27, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

Wirth did not know it at the time, Maxwell M. Rabb, Eisenhower's Secretary to the Cabinet, had come up with the idea of a cabinet presentation on the subject of national parks after reading an editorial, "We've Been Starving Our National Parks," in *The Saturday Evening Post* that February.²¹⁸ Rabb's assistant, Bradley H. Patterson, Jr., was taken with the idea and volunteered to work with Interior officials to arrange it. Patterson contacted Secretary McKay, and by May the Mission 66 staff began preparations for the meeting, which (after several postponements) finally occurred the following January.²¹⁹ Rabb's interest in national parks probably resulted from the steady barrage of negative press that was taking place, not any knowledge of the Mission 66 plans.²²⁰ But whatever the reasons for it, after only six months of planning the Park Service was asked to present its program directly to Eisenhower. Not since Roosevelt's involvement in the CCC had a chief executive potentially been so directly interested in Park Service operations. Wirth's bureaucratic facility, it seemed, was working again, putting his agency back into the forefront of federal recreational planning.

The rapid excitement Wirth had generated also attracted interest—and concerns—from other groups. In the same June memorandum in which he reported Eisenhower's request, Wirth also warned that "rumours unfounded in fact...in connection with Mission 66" had come to his attention. These were harmless, he insisted, as long as they remained "confined to the Service family." But clearly they had not. Park concessioners and the residents of gateway towns, in particular, were susceptible to "misunderstandings arising out of rumours." Conservation groups were also already concerned about a program that they knew nothing about, except that it would have enormous impacts on the parks. Wirth then offered some arguments for assuaging these concerns. "We must not look upon the Mission 66 program merely as a convenient vehicle through which to secure maximum park developments in a minimum of time," he insisted. Each park would be considered individually. In some cases new developments would be "curtailed sharply," but in others they would not; in some parks "concessioners facilities [would] be removed," but in other cases they would be "recommended for considerable expansion."²²¹ Although these qualifications could hardly be described as backtracking in

²¹⁸ *The Saturday Evening Post*, "We've Been Starving Our National Parks," *The Saturday Evening Post* 227, no. 33 (February 12, 1955): 10.

²¹⁹ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 65-66.

²²⁰ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 252.

²²¹ "Informational Memorandum No. 3, Mission 66, Progress and Procedures," June 27, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

a program that still had not even been officially launched, they reinforced the less radical tone of the revised “principles” that were attached to the memorandum.

Rumours of the type that concerned Wirth were inevitable, though, since the Park Service had offered a compelling vision at this point, but no specifics at all, at least not to anyone outside the “family.” The director had been as indefatigable as his staff, travelling, speaking, and publishing on Park Service activities and priorities. In a number of public speeches and articles, Wirth described a “broad study” that was underway, but did not go into detail. One reason was clear: even with the great speed at which new plans were drawn up, specific—and controversial—examples of just what the new program would mean for individual parks were not available, or at least were not ready to be presented. Wirth also did not yet use the term “Mission 66” in speeches or published articles. Apparently the mission was to be a secret one until its official unveiling in September at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.²²² While many undoubtedly knew something important was happening, the secrecy and speed with which Mission 66 was being assembled enhanced interest both in government and among the press. But in some quarters it also spawned resentment. Wirth was succeeding with the Eisenhower administration, but vital partners, including conservation groups and park concessioners, already realized that Mission 66 was indeed being planned like a top-secret wartime mission, without any participation from them or the public.

Wirth maintained close relationships with certain interest groups, however, a fact which may have further alienated wilderness advocates at the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, and the Wilderness Society. Automobile clubs and oil companies, for example, had obvious interests in automotive tourism, and as Congress prepared to increase highway spending, they helped Wirth secure a share of federal-aid highway appropriations specifically for park roads. The American Automobile Association (AAA) helped secure a \$67 million authorization for national park road and parkway construction as part of the Federal Highway Act signed in May 1954. The authorization was spread over the next three years, and as a result Congress made a \$23 million park highway

²²² For examples of speeches in which Wirth hints at, but does not use the term, “Mission 66,” see “Parks, Their Planning, and Some of Their Problems,” given at the Annual Recreation Conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, March 11, 1955; “An Adequate Park System for 300 Million People,” given at the National Citizens Planning Conference on Parks and Open Spaces in Washington, DC, May 24, 1955; “The Landscape Architect in National Park Work,” given in Detroit to the American Society of Landscape Architects in June 1955, and later published in *Landscape Architecture* 46, no. 1 (October 1955): 13-18. All the above and other speeches by Wirth are in Box 4 of the Conrad L. Wirth Collection, American Heritage Centre, University of Wyoming.

appropriation in 1955. Although limited to road and parkway construction, the amount doubled the total Park Service's construction budget for fiscal year 1956 and presaged the greater increases that would be made under Mission 66 the next year.²²³

Wirth knew how effective the AAA and other allies could be on Capitol Hill, and he worked closely with AAA executive vice president Russell E. Singer, and Michael Frome, the group's public relations director at the time. Already in December 1953 the AAA hosted a private dinner at the Metropolitan Club at which Wirth presented a brochure, *National Park System—Present and Future*, that included the kind of statistics and policy analysis that would become the basis of Mission 66. The dinner was attended by Secretary of the Interior McKay, Laurance S. Rockefeller, *National Geographic* editor Melville Bell Grosvenor, and several influential members of Congress, including Gerald P. Nye of South Dakota and Burton K. Wheeler of Montana. The evening recalled the many dinners Mather had held in the 1920s at the Cosmos Club in order to enlist and develop park support. In this case, however, it was the AAA organizing the effort, which it followed up with another event in December 1954, themed as an "American Pioneer Dinner," and held in another downtown hotel.²²⁴ Again the AAA hosted McKay, Wirth, and other officials, to participate in a "new evaluation of the role of the parks in the pattern of our national life." Singer asked Wirth to give a presentation to "show the parks in their proper perspective and to bring the discussion into focus." Wirth responded with a thorough presentation of statistics, images, and proposed policy initiatives, in a series of charts, graphs, and photographs. The material presented to the AAA and certain members of Congress at these private dinners indicated the basic justifications and organization of what Wirth would soon describe as Mission 66.²²⁵ There are no records of similar presentations to conservation groups in late 1954 or early 1955. At the time, perhaps, the political influence of the AAA made their friendship and support more valuable to Wirth in his dealings with a Congress that, at that point, had shown little willingness to fund any aspect of park improvements except park road construction.

²²³ Conrad L. Wirth to Russell E. Singer, June 30, 1955 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, American Heritage Centre, University of Wyoming); Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1954 Annual Report, 339-340; Rettie, *Our National Park System*, 251.

²²⁴ Michael Frome, *Greenspeak: Fifty Years of Environmental Muckraking and Advocacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 15.

²²⁵ Russell E. Singer to Conrad L. Wirth, December 1, 1954; Conrad L. Wirth, "The National Park System Present and Future," presentation text, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Conrad L. Wirth to Russell E. Singer, June 30, 1955 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, American Heritage Centre, University of Wyoming).

The Mission 66 planners assembling their program during 1955, however, did so independently, even secretly by today's standards, and no evidence suggests that the AAA or any private corporation directly influenced the preparation of prospectuses and policies any more than conservation groups did. The Mission 66 planners did employ at least one scientific survey of public opinion. In the spring of 1955 the Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., (a group funded by the Rockefeller family) agreed to pay for a professional "survey of the public concerning the national parks," conducted by a Princeton, New Jersey market research firm. The survey was conducted that summer and published in December. The results further reinforced already strong convictions among Park Service planning staff about the general direction of the Mission 66 program. Among the more than 1,700 members of the public who filled out the ten-page "Gallup survey," the three most common complaints about the parks concerned overcrowding, lack of overnight facilities, and lack of restaurants and other concessions. Among people who had visited parks between 1951 and 1955, about 70% reported their visit lasted one day or less, 50% were day trippers or had spent the night far from the park, and 20% spent the night in nearby gateway towns. Of the 30% that spent the night in a park, when asked what type of accommodations they would prefer almost 80% said motel or tourist cabin. Only 8% preferred hotels, while 14% wanted a campground.²²⁶ They were virtually all travelling by car, and their preferences for park accommodations, like their travel arrangements in general, seemed to be determined mostly by considerations of expense and convenience. While the survey was underway, Mission 66 staff also received the various "questionnaires" and requests for comments that had been sent out to park superintendents that spring. Extensive "interviews" had also been conducted with chosen park managers. The working staff considered and summarized all of the concerns and opinions described.²²⁷

Of the eight pilot studies underway, two incited no controversy. At the Adams National Historical Site in Quincy, Massachusetts, Regional Director Daniel J. Tobin, Hodge Hanson of the EODC, and the Mission 66 steering committee reviewed and accepted the working staff's prospectus for the park with no changes. Wilhelmina Harris, the site's superintendent, was not present at the meeting, but presumably agreed with the

²²⁶ Audience Research, Inc., "A Survey of the Public Concerning National Parks," unpublished report, Princeton, New Jersey, 1955, (National Park Service Technical Information Centre); Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 55-57; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 244-249.

²²⁷ Appleman includes a ten-page summary of the concerns of Park Service managers and staff. Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 22-32.

basic outline of the prospectus since it did not contradict the principles she already espoused. In 1962 she described these goals as keeping “the house and grounds looking as if the Adamses had just stepped out. Modern intrusions and development facilities will be located on additional acquired property so as to leave the original gift of land and intact buildings [made in 1946] with their authentic flavor....As long as this is continued, ‘living history’ will be felt.” The site’s exceptional integrity needed to be “preserved inviolate,” and adjacent small parcels of land should be acquired as the postwar “megapolis” of Boston encroached. The planners easily reached a consensus with Harris and others interested in the management of the property that had housed four generations of the illustrious Adams family between 1787 and 1927. The plans for Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee also were quickly resolved. Superintendent Ira B. Lykes and regional staff quickly agreed with the Mission 66 staff on the proposed outline of management for the Civil War battlefield and cemetery.²²⁸

In other cases, strong willed park superintendents forced the Mission 66 planners to reverse course that summer. At Fort Laramie National Monument (later redesignated a National Historic Site) in Wyoming, Superintendent David L. Hieb and Regional Landscape Architect Harvey P. Benson came to Washington to argue that the master plan they had developed should not be replaced by the new Mission 66 prospectus. In this case the working staff had attempted to simplify and accelerate the development of the park by converting an existing barracks for visitor use rather than acquiring additional land to build a new facility on the other side of Laramie Creek. The superintendent reacted angrily, and won over the steering committee, including Vint. After “heated discussion,” the working staff revised the prospectus to reflect the original master plan. In the discussions over plans for Chaco Canyon National Monument (later Chaco Culture National Historical Park) in New Mexico, Superintendent Glen D. Bean and Regional Landscape Architect Jerome C. Miller again took the working staff to task, demanding that the existing master plan be the basis of the new prospectus. In this case the original plan called for a road and visitor facilities on the canyon floor. The working staff suggested relocating both to the canyon rim where they would be less obtrusive, but would require visitors to hike down to the canyon floor for a closer look at the ruins.

²²⁸ “Master Plan for the Preservation and Use of Adams National Historic Site,” December 1962, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Katherine Lacy, *Cultural Landscape Report: Adams National Historic Site* (Brookline, Massachusetts: National Park Service, Olmsted Centre for Landscape Preservation, 1997), 63-64; Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 50-51.

Once again, however, the steering committee capitulated and the prospectus reverted to the earlier plan.²²⁹

At Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, the regional office in Santa Fe had apparently insisted that they would prepare the pilot prospectus themselves, bypassing the Mission 66 staff. Regional office staff in this case wanted to relocate the lodge, restaurant, headquarters, employee residences, and other facilities which since the 1920s had been centralized at Spruce Tree Point, near the site's most famous (and delicate) ruins. Since then the number of annual visitors had climbed to 42,000 in 1941 and to 125,000 in 1952; they expected the latter figure would more than double by 1966. Regional office staff decided that Mission 66 offered the "impetus necessary" to reverse conditions that were "stifling visitor enjoyment and causing deterioration of the physical environment at Spruce Tree Point." Mission 66 working and steering committees were not able to agree with the regional staff on the overall strategy for redevelopment, and in 1955 the Mesa Verde prospectus was "kept under continuing study."

Appleman reported that the three remaining pilot prospectuses, for Yellowstone, Everglades, and Mount Rainier national parks, were "accepted," subject to revisions. This characterization proved to be inaccurate, considering the contentious debate that would continue around Mission 66 planning for all of these parks for years to come. But as Appleman conceded dryly in his 1958 history, the preparation of the first prospectuses in 1955 "showed all too clearly that it was not easy always to solve specific problems by the application of a fine-sounding principle."²³⁰

²²⁹ "Tentative 1966 Prospectus for Fort Laramie National Monument," June 22, 1955, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); "Tentative Prospectus for Chaco Canyon National Monument," July 20, 1955; "Draft Mission 66 Prospectus for Chaco Canyon National Monument," August 8, 1955, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 50-53.

²³⁰ He made the comment regarding Everglades National Park, specifically. Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 49.

Chapter 9: Final Policies for Mission 66: “Our Heritage”

9.1 Mission 66 “Precepts”

Lon Garrison, the chairman of the steering committee, served as Wirth’s most trusted lieutenant for the early planning of Mission 66. Thomas Vint of course had greater experience, and Vint’s protégé and head of the working staff, Bill Carnes, was another landscape architect with decades of experience. But it was the former park superintendent and “chief ranger,” Garrison, who led the Mission 66 staff in Washington and who became the most important early representative of the program, with the exception of Wirth himself.

Garrison may not have had experience in design and construction, but he had credibility with park managers, and he helped cast Mission 66 policy in terms that resonated with field personnel. Since at least March Garrison had been drafting the “Guiding Precepts of Mission 66.” The precepts reflected the views and contributions of many, but ultimately only Wirth had greater influence on the articulation of the ideas presented. The precepts reiterated the basic themes of Park Service policy that informed the entire Mission 66 project: “Visitor enjoyment” of parks was the “best means of protecting them against exploitation or encroachment”; visitors must be “channeled to avoid overuse” and deterioration in certain areas; “channeling use” in this way required “proper development.” Mission 66 would therefore be a “use and development program” that would achieve the “preservation objectives of the Service.”²³¹

By August the “precepts” had reached a final form and became the first section of the “MISSION 66 Report” drafted in September for presentation at the Great Smokies conference. Additional “discussion sections” elaborated the precepts. “All visitors desiring to enter a national park,” the planners had agreed, “may do so,” whether by private vehicles, “drive-yourself” rentals, or permitted tour buses. “Limitations on numbers are not to be considered except for certain...ruins or buildings which...require limits.” In his draft, Garrison even crossed out “limits” and replaced the word with “restrictions.” Wirth and his planners, who reexamined almost every aspect of national

²³¹ “Steering Committee Precepts for Staff Guidance,” unsigned draft [Garrison], March 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

park operations at this time, never seriously discussed options for imposing limits on the numbers of people entering national parks.

The question of limiting the number of park visitors had been raised by field staff, however, including then superintendent of Sequoia Kings Canyon, Eivend T. Scoyen.²³² Garrison therefore addressed the matter—and quickly dismissed it—in the draft Mission 66 “precepts,” as well as in subsequent published articles. Garrison, along with Wirth, Vint, Carnes, and probably almost all of the Mission 66 planners, strongly believed that expanded use of the parks could occur without impairing them. Success would require reconceptualizing how parks should function as public places, and redeveloping them accordingly. Making parks into day use destinations, for example, could be achieved with wider roads, larger parking lots, and expanded “visitor use centres” to provide ample interpretive displays, bathrooms, and administrative areas for larger numbers of people. Limiting public access to parks would therefore not be necessary. It would have also betrayed fundamental principles of what national parks, as public parks, were intended to achieve. But while visitors would not be turned away, neither would they be “guaranteed overnight or meal facilities” in every park. The new iteration of the national park idea was intended to save the parks as truly public parks, even under the greatly increased pressures of the postwar era.²³³

Other wide ranging “discussions” were recorded by Garrison as the policy of the Mission 66 program matured that August. The “interpretive presentation” of a park or historic site should “take full advantage of the actual scene, object, or structure as the interpretive exhibit.” This implied the location of roads, trails, and “visitor use centres” near the historic landscapes and natural features that were to be interpreted by the Park Service and enjoyed by the public. On the other hand, where concession hotels encroached on natural or historic scenes, they would be removed and replaced by businesses outside the park, or by new concessions sited in less sensitive areas. At parks where “public accommodations in the immediate vicinity” of the park were available or could be developed, hotels within park boundaries would eventually be demolished, depending on the limitations of existing concession contracts. When overnight accommodations were considered necessary in a park, because of remoteness and public

²³² Eivend T. Scoyen to Lemuel A. Garrison, March 8, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

²³³ Lemuel A. Garrison, “Guiding Precepts Mission 66,” draft memorandum, August 29, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

“travel patterns” within parks, “competition in providing concession facilities” would be encouraged by seeking new concessioners, and sometimes multiple concessioners. Park Service administrative and maintenance buildings would be relocated according to the same priorities, removing them from parks wherever it was deemed practicable.²³⁴

Wirth and Garrison described Mission 66 that summer in terms that seriously revised the logistical model Mather and Albright had created for how national parks should function. A new planning archetype was taking shape, one that responded to postwar travel patterns and social trends. Writing for magazines such as *American Forests*, and *National Park Magazine*, Wirth and Garrison raised the curtain on Mission 66 that August, describing it as an accomplished fact: “MISSION 66 has been organized in the National Park Service offices,” Garrison announced, “to produce a comprehensive and integrated program of uses and preservation that will harmonize with the Service’s obligations under the Act of 1916.” He went on to summarize the Mission 66 “precepts,” addressing at more length the question of visitor restrictions, particularly for the readers of *National Parks Magazine*: “One of the common suggestions in the MISSION 66 study is that quotas should be established to limit the number of people who may visit an area. Many of the historical areas are self-limiting; but it is the opinion of the committee and the staff of MISSION 66 that, in the great natural areas, quotas are not necessary at this time. Rather, modern traffic handling methods and proper development to achieve protection and interpretation will enable most existing visitor locations to accommodate the crowds anticipated in 1966.” Wirth described his program in historical terms, “supporting the ideals and the vision of the pioneers of the national park movement,” through an “intensive study of all the problems facing the National Park Service—protection, staffing, interpretation, use, development, financing, needed legislation, forest protection, fire.” He and his staff had developed “experimental precepts to guide themselves and park staff in the certain pilot studies to test the validity of their new thinking.” Wirth rejected the idea of “rationing park use” as well: “The principle that is guiding the MISSION 66 Committee and Staff is that the parks belong to the people, and they have a right to use them” (emphasis in original). Redevelopment, and the “spread” of visitor use both geographically and seasonally, would make it possible.²³⁵

²³⁴ Lemuel A. Garrison, “Guiding Precepts Mission 66,” draft memorandum, August 29, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

²³⁵ Lemuel A. Garrison, “Mission 66,” *National Parks Magazine* 29, no. 122 (July-September 1955): 107-108; Conrad L. Wirth, “Mission 66,” *American Forests* 61, no. 8 (August 1955): 16-17.

As word of the still mysterious Mission 66 program reached those outside the Park Service, concerns and questions immediately surfaced. C. Edward Graves of the National Parks Association responded to a presentation by Wirth that August by denouncing Mission 66 as a "secret effort to develop a body of policies on a bureaucratic basis without participation by the public." He doubted that the Park Service would be flexible enough "to be altered by the impact of public opinion," now that such advice was finally being sought. Wirth responded with a repeat of his manifesto, which Graves had already heard him present personally to National Parks Association board members. Wirth added curtly that since the program was about to be presented to the Bureau of the Budget and Congress, "the details contained in it cannot be made public." Sounding all too officious, he informed Graves that his agency was not waiting for the "approval or disapproval" of "friends of the parks outside the Service." Although "the course of action to be followed" would be "affected considerably by public opinion," decisions affecting the park system "must rest with those specifically charged with responsibility." A similar response also soon went out to the president of the Sierra Club, Alexander Hildebrand, who also expressed concerns about "secrecy" in a series of letters requesting detailed information on plans for the Sierran parks. Wirth needlessly offended the Sierra Club and other conservation groups by refusing to bring them into the planning process. Negotiations with both Congress and park concessioners certainly did require some confidentiality, but the good will of the conservationists probably could have been won at the time with even perfunctory consideration. Wirth responded to them with none of the solicitation and warmth he showed other allies, such as the AAA. Suspicion of secrecy soon hardened into an adversarial conviction that Wirth and his staff intended to retain absolute authority over Mission 66 plans and would not share details until all significant decisions had been made. A struggle over who had the right to participate in national park planning began as soon as Mission 66 became public knowledge.²³⁶

Wirth was understandably preoccupied, at the time, with the intense pressure he had put on himself and his staff to be ready to present Mission 66 at the Public Services Conference held at Great Smoky Mountains National Park from September 19 to 24. By this time Mission 66 completely engaged Park Service staff all over the country, affecting

²³⁶ C. Edward Graves to Conrad L. Wirth, September 10, 1955; Conrad L. Wirth to C. Edward Graves, October 31, 1955; Conrad L. Wirth to Alexander Hildebrand, November 7, 1955; Alexander Hildebrand to Conrad L. Wirth, November 22, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

their daily activities and duties as well as the entire institutional culture of the agency. Wirth had demanded that his Washington staff, with extensive help from regional and park staff, complete the eight pilot prospectuses, finalize the written "principles guiding the study," and draft any legislation considered necessary. He also asked for an "all-inclusive statement and budget" of the program in the form of a "brief, popular-style book," filled with charts, tables, and photographs, for distribution to the press, public, and members of Congress. The details of the program would be assembled in a longer report with chapters on every aspect of the initiative, which was intended to serve as the "bible" that would guide the program over the next ten years. "Everyone on the Staff felt that the Director had given a pretty heavy assignment," Appleman reported; but there was more. In addition to preparing for the September conference, Wirth also asked that the entire program, including draft prospectuses and budget estimates for most of the 194 parks and historic sites of the park system, be in a completed form by the end of the year in order to be submitted to the Bureau of the Budget for approval in December.²³⁷ With approval from that office, the appropriations process could begin early in 1956, making it possible for Congress to act by the end June, in time to launch Mission 66 at the beginning of fiscal year 1957 (July 1, 1956). Not only would the overall costs of the program need to be estimated, but they would need to be broken down into annual appropriations requests covering the next ten years.²³⁸

Wirth and his staff presented their work on September 20. The conference of about 200 superintendents and other officials was dominated by an extended discussion of the Mission 66 program. The mystery surrounding the details of the program, and perhaps word of Eisenhower's personal interest in it, also made the conference a major public relations event. Papers from all over the country covered the story. The Mission 66 staff managed to have ready an illustrated booklet, "The National Park System," and a longer "MISSION 66 Report," still in draft form and without the budget estimates (figs. 27, 28).²³⁹ All the pilot prospectuses were "complete" (if hardly completely settled), except for Yellowstone, where negotiations with the concessioner William Nichols had

²³⁷ Mission 66 planners counted 180 units of the park system in 1955; Dwight Rettie's recent study suggests there were 194. The discrepancy is apparently the result of how certain "affiliated areas" and national cemeteries were and are counted. Rettie's figures are used here for the sake of consistency. Rettie, *Our National Park System*, 252-253.

²³⁸ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 250-251; Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 58-63.

²³⁹ "The National Park System," National Park Service brochure, n.d. [1955]; "MISSION 66 Report," unpublished report, September 1955, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

taken a sudden turn that August.²⁴⁰ The staff also prepared Wirth's presentation, which described the full scope of Mission 66 and emphasized arguments intended to support huge budget requests soon to be submitted to the Bureau of the Budget and Congress. Garrison and Carnes made a more technical presentation of the details contained in the draft "MISSION 66 Report," including the final "precepts." They also "set up shop" in an adjoining room where superintendents could be briefed individually by Mission 66 staff.²⁴¹

Wirth began his keynote speech by quoting statistics from the AAA and the National Association of Travel Organizations on the postwar phenomenon of travel to national parks: 48 million people visited parks in 1954, and at Yellowstone alone they spent \$20 million in and near the park. "Pleasure travel is big business today," Wirth observed, and in "preserving and properly using the National Parks we are perpetuating a saleable commodity," one that contributed enormously to both big and small businesses all over the country. Then Wirth expressed his own version of the "unique paradox" of national park management: "To the extent we preserve them...and use them for their own inherent, noncommercial, human values, to that same degree do they contribute their part to the economic life of the nation." Parks were the one natural resource, in other words, that could boost modern progress only if it were *not* "used," in the traditional sense of logging, grazing, dam construction, or private resort development. But use by tourists—if done within the context of "proper" park development—could go on indefinitely without unacceptable "impairment" or loss. But it was time for the federal government to understand the economics of the situation, and make appropriate investments in this "important factor in the national economy." Low appropriations had made the Park Service incapable of protecting "irreplaceable features," and visitor enjoyment was suffering as well. "Masses of people" left the parks after visiting "with curiosity unsatisfied and enjoyment and appreciation incomplete—all because we do not have the facilities nor the personnel to help them know and comprehend what it is they see." Wirth emphasized the economic importance of the parks, and then implied that good business practices, if nothing else, demanded an investment before the tangible and intangible benefits of the park system were lost forever. He reiterated Progressive Era justifications for federal park making in a way that Stephen Mather would have admired,

²⁴⁰ Lemuel A. Garrison to Edmund B. Rogers, August 6, 1955, (Box A-247, Yellowstone National Park Archives).

²⁴¹ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 62.

and added an indictment of budget policies that now threatened to destroy the parks and their very considerable economic and social dividends.²⁴²

Wirth refrained from giving the details of proposed budgets, but the broad scope and policy of the program was delineated. The draft "MISSION 66 Report," which would be the basis of the report presented to Eisenhower and Congress the following January, described much more than a "development program." In addition to chapters on road, trail, concessions, housing, and other forms of capital development, the report outlined increased "operating needs" that would have to be met to run the modernized park system. While acknowledging that "personnel needs will not increase in direct proportion to increase in visitation," because of more efficient facilities and interpretive displays, the planners still estimated a 10% increase in "employee man-years" would be required for each of the ten years of Mission 66. Park staff engaged in a wide range of "management, protection, and interpretation" would also need to be expanded. This meant permanent increases in annual operating costs, not just a ten-year construction program.

Park interpretation—the educational displays, materials and presentations that rangers made available in every park—received a particular emphasis in the report. The planners wanted new audio-visual media, such as slide shows and films, to assist in the overwhelming task of interpreting the significance of parks to thousands of visitors. The number of publications available was also to be increased systematically, with brochures and booklets written for specific age groups as well as for the general public. Museum and scientific collections required new facilities and trained personnel, and the Historic Sites Survey and Historic American Buildings Survey, both inactive since 1941, would resume with Mission 66 funding. The need for agency personnel development and training were still being studied, but a "comprehensive training plan" was proposed as part of the program. "Area Investigations" of potential additions to the park system and "Comprehensive Boundary and Scientific Studies" for every park would contribute to a "National Park System Plan," that would make recommendations to "round out" the park system and make sure it represented a full range of "significant major types of areas," including "scenic, scientific, historic, seashore, etc." Existing "River Basin Studies" and

²⁴² "Public Services," agenda, September 20, 1955 (Box 6, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); "Statement by Conrad L. Wirth, Public Services Conference," September 20, 1955 (Box 4, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

“Reservoir Recreation Area Planning” would continue and increase, as would “Archaeological Survey and Salvage” associated with them. Mission 66 would not merely physically redevelop the parks themselves; it would expand the national park system and return the Park Service to something that at least suggested its New Deal size and functions.²⁴³

The setting of the September conference was particularly appropriate. Mission 66 planners often cited Great Smoky Mountains as an example of how a day use-only national park could work. Authorized in 1926, Great Smoky Mountains was the most heavily visited park in the system, but it had never had overnight accommodations other than campgrounds. Gateway communities, especially Gatlinburg, Tennessee, provided all the motels, shops, and restaurants the travelling public desired. Mission 66 plans for the park called for road improvements and “visitor use centres,” but no new motel concessions were deemed necessary. The Public Services Conference, in fact, was not actually held in the park, but in conference facilities in nearby Gatlinburg.

The press coverage of the September conference included stories in *The New York Times* and many other papers. *The Washington Post* editorialized that “Congress ought to give a sympathetic ear” to the Mission 66 proposal. Papers from Eugene, to Salt Lake City, to Baltimore echoed the positive response, and Secretary of the Interior McKay gave his assurance that the administration would support Mission 66.²⁴⁴ Eisenhower, however, suffered a heart attack on September 23, while the Park Service conference was ongoing. The president, who had yet to give his official approval, remained convalescing in Denver for seven weeks. Already postponed for scheduling reasons, the cabinet presentation was now delayed at least until his return. The Mission 66 staff was busier than ever that fall, nervously preparing final budget figures for Congress, as well as the presentation for Eisenhower. Anticipating a positive reception in Congress, Wirth asked the Bureau of the Budget to approve sending a request for increased appropriations that fall, which would have launched Mission 66 within fiscal year 1956. The Bureau of the

²⁴³ “Statement by Conrad I. Wirth, Public Services Conference,” September 20, 1955 (Box 4, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

²⁴⁴ Sydney Gruson, “U.S. Park Service Plans Expansion,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 1955; “Mission 66,” editorial, *The Washington Post*, October 17, 1955; “Digest of Newspaper Comment,” November 9, 1955 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

Budget demurred, however, insisting that Eisenhower first be given time to personally review the details of the program.²⁴⁵

9.2 "Our Heritage"

By the end of the year, Wirth and his staff had accomplished a major bureaucratic and planning feat: the individual park prospectuses and other information and recommendations from the field all had been assembled and digested in Washington into a complete, ten-year Mission 66 proposal, dated January 1956. Reviewed and approved by McKay, the report included a complete annual budget breakdown, with \$66 million proposed for fiscal year 1957 and annual increases building to \$83 million in 1966. The total cost to the federal government, not including concessioner investments, would be \$787 million over ten years. Only about \$475 million of that total was for construction; the rest was for "management and protection" and "maintenance and rehabilitation" that the agency would need to do anyway. Mission 66 was not presented as a separate construction budget initiative, in other words, but as an overall increase in the agency's combined (operations and construction) annual budget. In fact it amounted to roughly doubling the agency's average combined annual appropriations. The agency's budget's never returned to previous levels; as presented in 1956, Mission 66 entailed a permanent expansion of the park system, park staff, and all the activities of the Park Service.²⁴⁶

The report offered the most lucid summary of Mission 66 that would be made, and served as the "bible" that Wirth envisioned. It identified the trends, needs, and expectations that the planners had identified thoroughly over the previous eleven months. According to the plan, the increase from 50 million to 80 million annual visits by 1966 could be accommodated. Day use visits by automobile would become the ever more dominant means of experiencing most parks. The "precepts" guiding the new program were largely unchanged: preservation and increased use would be accomplished together through redevelopment according to new policies. A slightly revised "8-point program"

²⁴⁵ Sydney Gruson, "M'Kay Reassures U.S. Park Experts," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1955; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 252.

²⁴⁶ In 1955 the combined agency budget had been less than \$33 million; with federal highway money the 1956 total was raised to almost \$49 million. In presenting the cost of Mission 66 in his final report, Wirth took the proposed 1957 budget of about \$66 million (assumed to be a normal or "base" budget), multiplied by ten, and subtracted from the \$787 million estimated total for the 10-year program. The difference, he suggested was the actual increase, or true cost, of Mission 66. The \$787 million figure ended up being used anyway despite this effort to minimize the apparent cost. "Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use," January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

described the basic policies of Mission 66. Overnight accommodations would be expanded through "greater participation of private enterprise," meaning concessioner investments in the parks, or private businesses outside park boundaries. New public facilities and interpretive services would "improve the protection of the parks through visitor cooperation." Operating funds would be increased and field staff would be expanded, and provided with housing. Inholdings would be acquired, and "the protection and preservation of wilderness areas within the national park system" would be accomplished "in ways that will leave them unimpaired."²⁴⁷ This last (eighth) point had not appeared in earlier draft versions. Appleman reported that "the Director and the Staff felt that Point 8 was superfluous," but they added it to assuage "the fears of certain conservationists" following the Gatlinburg conference. "Wilderness protection had never been an issue in the staff discussions," explained Appleman, because Wirth and his staff believed that Mission 66 "guaranteed wilderness protection" already. The entire purpose of redeveloping the parks was to "channel" public use into less destructive patterns; in most cases, they felt, this would not involve significant encroachment on wilderness, and on the contrary would help preserve it. But after Gatlinburg, Wirth began to hold monthly meetings with representatives of conservation groups. "Point 8" was added as a result.²⁴⁸

The final report did not contain the individual park prospectuses that had been so quickly prepared. Most of them were still under internal review and would not be released to the public until the following spring, or later in some cases. The larger part of the final Mission 66 report, in fact, did not address specific construction proposals at all; it put forward an overall vision and budget for "managing and operating the system." The report introduced (or at least institutionalized) a new vocabulary for describing national park planning. The word "park" was defined specifically as any area administered by the Park Service, and "resources" were the "physical assets—historical, archaeological, scenic, or scientific—contained in a park." Resources could be either "primary resources" or "secondary assets," and "in general, the primary resources were "the scenic features that distinguish an area." Park "values" were the benefits that accrued through

²⁴⁷ "Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use," January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

²⁴⁸ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 75-76. David Brower describes a meeting with Wirth late in 1955 in which he and Howard Zahniser asked for a greater emphasis on the preservation of wilderness as "the primary value of the parks." David R. Brower, "'Mission 65' Is Proposed by Reviewer (cont.)"

use of resources, and “park visitor experience” was the “sum total of the many things a visitor does, his impressions, new concepts, emotional reactions and responses.”

“Overuse” existed whenever a resource was destroyed or damaged “in excess of the ability to recover,” for example if a “basic alteration of the ecology of an area” resulted. Overuse also was indicated when there was an “impairment of opportunity of appropriate visitor experience (overcrowding of caves, historic houses, etc.)”²⁴⁹

The Mission 66 report indicated desired levels of staffing at the park level to achieve adequate “protection” and “interpretation” of park landscapes and resources. The “services” of rangers, naturalists, and historians were described as necessary to assure the vital distinction between merely using recreational parks (typically state or local parks) and “understanding national park values.” For the first time the term “visitor center” was used consistently to describe the “hub of the park interpretive program,” where “museum exhibits, dioramas, relief models, recorded slide talks, and other graphic devices” would “help visitors understand the meaning of the park and its features, and how best to protect, use, and appreciate them.” Visitor centres, interpretive walks, audio-visual presentations, roadside exhibits, publications, park museums and collections all were described as coordinated and essential parts of the new national park experience—summarized as “enjoyment without impairment”—that Mission 66 would make possible. The Mission 66 report further (and somewhat repetitiously) outlined policies in another “program” of fourteen points, beginning unambiguously with the “preservation of park resources” as the “basic requirement underlying all park management.” The second point reiterated that “substantial and appropriate use” of the parks was the best means to realize their “basic purpose,” as stated in the 1916 Park Service legislation. “Adequate and appropriate developments” therefore were required for “public use and appreciation of any area, and for the prevention of over-use.” Also, “an adequate information and interpretive service” was essential to “proper park experience.”²⁵⁰

The report described the situation of park concessioners in detail, particularly using the example of Yellowstone. The planners still asserted that “the only justification for a concession operation within a park is to supply needed visitor services that cannot

of Park Service’s New Brochure on Wilderness,” *National Parks Magazine* 32, no. 132 (January 1958): 3-6, 45-47.

²⁴⁹ Howard R. Stagner, “Mission 66 Definitions,” draft memorandum, July 18, 1955 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

²⁵⁰ “Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use,” January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

be provided satisfactorily in any other way.” They nevertheless called for new concession developments that would greatly expand the capacity of overnight accommodations in cases where they had determined they were needed. The stated reasons for such a determination were first the remoteness of certain park destinations, which were too far from gateway communities for easy access, and second the “travel patterns” of visitors, which apparently referred to public expectations for overnight accommodations near certain popular destinations. The independent “Gallup survey” had reinforced the planners’ conviction that the public wanted motel type accommodations, not hotels. In twenty-six large parks in which overnight accommodations were considered necessary or desirable, the Mission 66 planners called for an increase in the total overnight lodging capacity from 23,797 to 58,797. This dramatic expansion was calculated to keep pace with the overall rise in visitation, as well as a predicted rise in the proportion of visitors seeking overnight accommodations, a ratio that the planners raised from 1 in 3.8, to 1 in 3. There was no explanation for this increase, except that it accurately predicted future demand on the part of the travelling public. The total cost of such an expansion in the concessioner “pillow count” in the park system would reach \$62 million, with concessioners to provide \$39 million of the total.

The proposed construction budgets in the final report also redressed an imbalance that Wirth and Garrison had repeatedly deplored. Because Congress had been willing to pass federal-aid highway legislation, 80% of park construction budgets during the postwar period (up until 1956) had been dedicated specifically to park roads. While road spending would be slightly increased under Mission 66, most of the increase in construction would be in “buildings of all types, sewer, water, electric, and other utilities,” addressing a “serious shortage in other types of [non-highway] development.” The report emphasized the lack of overnight accommodations and dining facilities as top public concerns, as their “Gallup survey” had indicated. “Interpretive services, the results of which are a measure of protection,” fell short of what was required. Increased operations budgets were as necessary as new construction for a balanced program. “Concentration on building roads without providing facilities for those who use them, or developing a park fully without providing adequate operating resources, does not solve problems; it creates them.” Wirth also wanted it known that Mission 66 was “not a program for the construction of extensive road mileage.” New roads would be built

mostly in new parks; 90% of proposed road construction would consist of “reconstruction and realignment” of existing roads.²⁵¹

The planners also described a “modest program of scientific and historical investigations and studies” that would be necessary for the “management of park resources.” Mission 66 would be later criticized for not including a major scientific research component in a program that was so ambitious in other ways. The report justified research only as necessary for interpretive programs and publications, and therefore related directly to park management and “protection.” Wirth and his planners considered a program of pure scientific research beyond the agency’s mandate and unjustified as a budget category; the Bureau of the Budget and Congress probably would have agreed. The final Mission 66 report did include proposals for “wildlife conservation,” noting that “the maintenance of animal species in harmony with their environments is not simply a matter of ‘letting nature take its course,’” and that the “techniques of managing wildlife in the islands of wilderness represented by the park areas are only partly developed.” Much research needed to be done, the authors noted, particularly on the ecology of “overabundant hoofed animals and the maintenance of their range areas, the safeguarding of rare and threatened species, the reintroduction of extirpated species, the control of exotic animals and plants,” and other management problems. But if issues were identified, the remedies described were short and vague. “An adequate biological program” was to be achieved by “strengthening” existing staff and efforts, and through “cooperative research agreements,” and where needed, Park Service studies to “supplement cooperative activities.” A budget for such biological research, however, was unspecified and included in the “over-all management and protection programs” of Mission 66.²⁵² When compared to the detailed \$475 million construction budget, it is obvious that Mission 66 was devised by landscape architects and park interpreters, not scientists. The priorities of the program reflected the reality that the Park Service’s legislative mandate was to protect parks while facilitating public use of them, not to function as a scientific research institute. Nevertheless a historic opportunity

²⁵¹ “Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use,” January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

²⁵² “Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use,” January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

to increase and emphasize the role of scientific research in the management of the parks was not so much lost, as never found.²⁵³

One major component of Mission 66 remained to be described in the final report: every decision and feature of the program needed to be put into the context of a larger national plan for meeting the postwar demand for outdoor recreational facilities. If Wirth failed to provide such a plan, Mission 66 would truly be no more than a “development” program, not a “conservation” program, as the planners repeatedly asserted it was. If there were no effort to coordinate state park and national forest development with proposed national park plans, aspects of Mission 66, such as the development of new concessioner motel complexes at Yellowstone, could easily be perceived as “overdeveloping” national parks without adequate study of alternatives to satisfy the postwar appetite for outdoor recreation. The lack of a meaningful component of public participation in Mission 66 planning only intensified the potential perception that Park Service planners, even if they were the most experienced park makers of their day, had failed to transcend the insular culture of their own agency and put their plans into a broader context of recreational land use. Unless Mission 66 were part of a convincing and coordinated strategy for national recreational planning, such a rapid and ambitious development program could and would be characterized as misguided, and finally terribly destructive.

Wirth, however, had made his most important professional contributions as a national recreational planner. Since 1942 his ambition had been to resume the project of national recreational planning through whatever agency or funding was available. The final Mission 66 plan therefore included extensive descriptions of “Nationwide Recreation Planning,” a project that had been “dropped before World War II” but would be “reestablished” through Mission 66. Wirth quoted extensively from the 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act, and he insisted that the act would suffice for the completion of a national plan that would be the context—ultimately the justification—for whatever he proposed under Mission 66. But the 1936 legislation was not really a strong basis for the Park Service to continue to function as the nation’s recreational planning agency. Wirth recognized this, because since at least early in 1955 his staff had been drafting legislation that would have given the Park Service various new powers, for example to authorize federal loans to concessioners, establish a revolving fund to build

²⁵³ On the failure of Mission 66 to adequately fund biological research, see Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the* (cont.)

park housing, or to build new facilities on federal lands that were not designated parklands.²⁵⁴ Wirth had spent his career developing the Park Service as the nation's principal recreational planning agency, and he dearly wanted legislative authority to renew and expand that responsibility for the postwar era. But while Wirth had great success with appropriations subcommittees, he failed with the congressional legislative committees whose support he needed for such initiatives. "We prepared bills and they were introduced," he later wrote, "but try as we might, they were never called up for hearings. Consequently we did the best we could without them."²⁵⁵

In his memoirs, the director describes his dealings with Congress in some detail.²⁵⁶ As Mather and Albright had, Wirth personally presented and defended his agency's budget requests and any other proposed legislation in Congress. Throughout his career he was known for his close relationships with members of Congress and his skilful dealings with their staffs. His warm relationships with appropriations subcommittee chairmen, especially Michael J. Kirwan in the House and Carl Hayden in the Senate, made Wirth a powerful advocate in the mid-1950s. But in the end the director was forced to accept political limitations on what Mission 66 could aspire to be. Mission 66 never received a new legislative mandate that would have recast the agency's recreational planning authority. Legislation of that type was simply out of Wirth's reach politically, even as he attained greatly increased park appropriations. Wirth and his planners went ahead anyway and believed that Mission 66 could be "carried out under existing legislation." Congress tacitly approved of the idea of a "ten-year program," but it did so only through the annual appropriations process. No other legislation authorized a ten-year total for Mission 66 spending or strengthened the Park Service's role as a national recreational planning agency. This would prove to be a relatively weak foundation for any claims Wirth could make for Mission 66 as a national plan for recreational land use.

But in January of 1955, the political future of the Mission 66 program looked bright. Eisenhower had returned to Washington, and in his State of the Union address that month he found time to ask Congress to support a major national park budget initiative that his administration was about to submit. On January 27, Wirth, with

National Parks, 168-173.

²⁵⁴ "Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use," January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library); Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 59.

²⁵⁵ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 322.

²⁵⁶ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 315-352.

Garrison, Carnes, and Howard R. Stagner (assistant director of the Mission 66 working staff) finally made their long postponed cabinet presentation. Eisenhower's reaction, at that point, hardly could have been in doubt. Nevertheless Wirth recalled that no presentation "made before the cabinet, or perhaps anywhere else...had ever received so much preparation." Wirth presented a carefully scripted, "sixteen-minute" slide talk, and showed a "three-minute colour movie." The images emphasized overcrowded national park frontcountry scenes, with a very brief summary of what Mission 66 was intended to accomplish. Eisenhower asked only one, rather good question: "Why was this request not made back in 1953?" McKay answered it, reminding the president that his own administration's budget policies, until recently, had not allowed major new spending proposals for national parks. Indeed, as recently as 1954 McKay reorganized the Park Service with the stated intention of addressing problems solely by "increasing efficiency." But the time was now right. Wirth's alacrity in bringing a fully elaborated program to Eisenhower as quickly as possible, once the tide had turned, validated his political instincts.²⁵⁷

Eisenhower gladly endorsed the program, but he had agreed in advance to write letters to Congress supporting only the 1957 annual budget request of \$66 million, not the ten-year, \$787 million figure. Mission 66 would be subject to the annual appropriations process and judged annually on its merits; there would be no separate authorizing legislation, as there soon would be for the Interstate Highway Act. Eisenhower officially endorsed the program, but if he or his administration officials subsequently felt the money was not well spent, that endorsement would simply evaporate. Samuel Dodd, an official at the Bureau of the Budget who had been a principal supporter of Mission 66, later gave the Park Service some direct advice on how to assure continued budgetary support: make sure that Mission 66 resulted in public facilities—buildings, road improvements, and other public services—as advertised. If the money were diverted to other purposes, even well justified ones, the Bureau of the Budget and Congress would conclude that Mission 66 was merely building up a bureaucracy, or that it was a pretext for spending for other purposes. In either case, the increased level of funding would immediately be at risk in the next annual appropriation.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 254; Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 63-70; 78-87.

²⁵⁸ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 97.

On February 8, exactly one year after Wirth first presented Mission 66 to his staff at a Monday morning staff meeting, the Department of the Interior and the AAA jointly sponsored an elaborate dinner in the basement dining room of the Interior Building (fig. 29). Like the smaller 1954 dinner hosted by the AAA, the event was again themed as an "American Pioneer Dinner." The state parks department of South Dakota provided the main course of elk and bison meat for the 350 guests. According to *The New York Times*, the evening was "the kick-off in a drive to win implementation" of the Mission 66 program as Congress began the fiscal year 1957 appropriations process. Among the guests were sixty members of Congress, various Interior and other administration officials, and Horace Albright and the rest of the board of the American Civic and Planning Association. Other attendees included the leaders of numerous outdoor recreation and conservation groups, heads of state parks departments, and representatives of travel and tourism organizations. The photographer Ansel Adams provided prints of Yosemite views for the guests. But at least some "purists," including Devereux Butcher of the National Parks Association, were intentionally not invited.²⁵⁹ American Automobile Association Vice President Russell Singer served as "toastmaster," and spoke extensively about how he and his group had been "giving serious attention to the problems of the national parks," which could not be addressed just through increased appropriations, but also required reconsidering "the basic concept of these public lands," as represented by Mission 66. Wirth gave the slide and film presentation of his program, and also distributed copies of a new and expanded edition of the Mission 66 illustrated booklet aimed at a general audience. The booklet had been rewritten and redesigned by an outside public relations firm, all privately paid for along with the printing cost by unidentified "friends of the National Park Service." The full colour cover (a design suggested by Wirth himself) depicted the Liberty Bell, with the superimposed image of a man, woman, and two children. With professional illustrations and graphics, and a far snappier editorial voice, *Our Heritage, A Plan for Its Protection and Use: "MISSION 66"* was a powerful piece of promotional literature (fig. 30). The ideas and much of the text, however, were drawn from the earlier draft document, the final Mission 66 report, Wirth's Gatlinburg speech, and other Mission 66 reports and memoranda. The "8- point

²⁵⁹ Frome, *Greenspeak*, 16.

plan” and the annualized \$787 million budget were included, as were the guiding “precepts,” in a final section on “how the plan was developed.”²⁶⁰

Wirth also arranged for the Walt Disney company to provide a short film for the occasion, “Adventure in the National Parks,” which was a compilation of excerpts from “The Living Desert” and “The Vanishing Prairie” (from the True-Life Adventure Series), two short movies that had been filmed in national parks. Wirth had genuine respect for Disney and for his company’s nature films, which at the time were being broadcast as a part of Disney’s evening television show. He even hoped that Disney himself would endorse Mission 66 in the film’s introduction, since he was already doing so much to popularize the parks.²⁶¹ The number of corporate sponsors, connections, and representatives at the 1956 American Pioneer Dinner illustrated Wirth’s close relationship to tourist, automotive, and other private business interests. Since Stephen Mather’s day, Park Service directors had formed alliances with leading business groups and local “boosters” who helped convince members of Congress to support park legislation and appropriations. In the business friendly climate of the Eisenhower years, Wirth cultivated this traditional convergence of interests and formed close friendships not only with the AAA, but with individual state automobile associations and oil companies. Phillips Petroleum, for example, soon paid for an informational brochure on Mission 66 and also issued a road map series highlighting the national park system. Sinclair Oil featured national parks in a series of print advertisements (figs. 31,32).²⁶² The centre spread image in *Our Heritage* (a full colour photograph of Jackson Hole and the Teton Range) was donated by Standard Oil of California. While there was nothing new or unethical about such donations and friendships, there is also no doubt that another special interest group—the conservation organizations—felt that they had lacked similar levels of access, and that their points of view had not significantly influenced Mission 66 planning.

9.3 Appropriations

Rapid success in Congress followed on the heels of the American Pioneer Dinner. The Eisenhower administration submitted a \$66 million Park Service appropriation

²⁶⁰ Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 91-94; William M. Blair, “Saving the Parks,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 1956; “Pioneer Dinner Launches Mission 66,” *National Parks Magazine* 30, no. 125 (April 1956): 59-60; National Park Service, *Our Heritage, A Plan for Its Protection and Use: “MISSION 66”* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1956).

²⁶¹ Conrad L. Wirth to Ben Sharpsteen, December 29, 1955 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

request to the Senate in February. The Appropriations Committee not only approved it but increased it to \$68 million; the House approved the action before the end of the month. In fact members of Congress in both the House and the Senate had been following the progress of Mission 66 for some time, and a few members had begun to act on their own to secure funding. The House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations not only approved the 1957 request, they agreed to a supplemental \$17 million request that was made available immediately as part of fiscal year 1956.²⁶³ Congress, it seemed, had rediscovered the national parks. Total Park Service budgets over the next ten years would exceed \$1 billion. By this measure, even critics of Mission 66 would have to acknowledge its success. Mission 66 introduced a new level of congressional support for the park system, one that has been maintained ever since.²⁶⁴

The Department of the Interior gave Wirth its Citation for Distinguished Service that March, and over the coming year many who participated in Mission 66 planning would receive similar recognition. But even though Wirth and his planners had convinced Congress to begin a new era of park modernization, many of the details for what this would mean to individual parks had not yet been decided. Mission 66 prospectuses for every park in the system had been submitted from the field by the end of 1955, but preparations for the cabinet meeting and American Pioneer Dinner had delayed the review, revision, and final approval of the documents. As was the case with the pilot prospectuses, many of these plans involved heated debate and careful negotiation. In January 1956 Wirth had begun meeting with the Mission 66 staff in a series of Saturday and Sunday meetings dedicated to the review of the draft prospectuses sent in by superintendents all over the country. By March the review had been completed, as it needed to be since Mission 66 construction projects would begin that July with the new fiscal year. At that time, Wirth reminded his field staff that Mission 66 had “definitely gone beyond the stage of justification” and was “now in the action stage.” Superintendents with concessioners in their parks were told to ask them to prepare plans

²⁶² Department of the Interior, *1956 Annual Report*, 303.

²⁶³ “Mission 66,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 1956; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 262; Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 89.

²⁶⁴ Using Dwight Rettie’s statistical index, combined appropriations per unit of the park system in constant 1990 dollars rose (in round figures) from about \$629,000 in 1929 to \$1.2 million in 1939, and then dropped to \$410,000 in 1949. They rose again to \$1.8 million in 1959 and to \$2 million at the end of Mission 66 in 1966. Appropriations continued to rise after Mission 66 to \$2.2 million per unit of the system in 1973 and \$2.9 million in 1995. Rettie also reports the total number of visits recorded to the park system, however, rose from 127 million to 383 million between 1966 and 1995. Based on these visitation figures one could argue federal support for the parks has waned. Rettie, *Our National Park System*, 251-253.

for how they intended to meet the investment responsibilities described for them in the prospectuses.²⁶⁵ Through the rest of 1956, the Washington Office was kept busy issuing press releases that accompanied the public “briefs,” or summaries, of the Mission 66 prospectuses for every park. New revisions of the prospectuses in many cases were released over the coming years. But to a remarkable degree, Mission 66 planning for both Park Service and concessioner facilities was completed in 1956, although in most cases the details of architectural and landscape design were still to be elaborated.²⁶⁶

The administrative structure of the Park Service also began returning to normal as the initial planning of Mission 66 ended. Communications between the field staff and Washington once again had to be routed through the regional directors by March. In February, acting on a plan devised by Garrison, Wirth replaced the Mission 66 working staff with a smaller, permanent Mission 66 staff, still headed by Carnes, assisted by Howard Stagner. Garrison oversaw a similar reduction and institutionalization of the steering committee, which became the Mission 66 Advisory Committee and which he continued to chair for the time being. The advisory committee was intended to have a rotating membership with increased representation from regional offices and parks. Thomas Vint still served on it, and now was joined by one of his oldest colleagues, the architect Herbert Maier, who at the time was the assistant director of Region IV. Other members included superintendents, and design professionals from the WODC and the EODC. Garrison himself, perhaps sensing that the most important challenges now awaited in the field, replaced Edmund Rogers as superintendent of Yellowstone in November 1956.²⁶⁷

Mission 66 was about to become a reality in scores of national parks. Though the program had been planned largely without public participation, by now it was essential to convince the public—not to mention concessioners, conservation groups, and everyone else concerned with conditions in the parks—that the huge disruptions and extensive construction activity they were about to witness all made up a “conservation” not a

²⁶⁵ Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 91; Between October 1955 and November 1956, Wirth sent out four additional “informational memoranda” all on the subject of “procedures for preparing final prospectuses”: “Memorandum No. 4, “MISSION 66, Procedures for Preparing Final Report,” October 7, 1955; “Memorandum No. 5, “MISSION 66, Procedures for Preparing Final Prospectuses,” March 16, 1956; “Memorandum No. 7, “MISSION 66, Preparation of Prospectus Briefs,” November 9, 1956, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

²⁶⁶ Many of these press releases are conserved at National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

²⁶⁷ Lemuel A. Garrison to Conrad L. Wirth, August 17, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 95-97.

“development” program. Wirth knew that public relations would now be paramount to continued political success. Public interpretive programs and brochures describing Mission 66 were quickly prepared, and Wirth himself oversaw the drafting of a scripted slide show, with recorded narration by him and other officials, to be made available in every park. The presentation was repeatedly revised and carefully planned down to the last image projected. The scripted slide show became a principal means of conveying the purposes and desired image of Mission 66 to park visitors.²⁶⁸ The priority of almost all the public information prepared at the time was to present Mission 66 as a “conservation” effort. One of the earliest drafts of a public brochure, “Mission 66: Questions and Answers,” answered the first question it posed, “What is MISSION 66?” with the answer: “MISSION 66 is a *conservation* program for the national park system” (emphasis in original). Park redevelopment was “simply one of the means by which ‘enjoyment-without-impairment’” could be accomplished, the text continued. Other means included educating visitors to cause less damage, and spreading “visitor load” geographically and seasonally. Mission 66 was not just a “construction program,” but a “comprehensive program” that would provide “facilities and adequate staffing to permit proper protection, interpretation, maintenance, and administration.”²⁶⁹ A long struggle over the public image of Mission 66 had already begun.

Within the Park Service, Wirth worked hard to establish new traditions that would define the agency’s identity for the next generation of its employees. The new Arrowhead logo figured prominently everywhere, including on redesigned uniforms. Wirth also wanted to create holidays and celebrations specific to the Park Service. “Three permanent dates” were to be observed “with suitable ceremonies in each area of the system” in order to commemorate the agency’s history. Campfire Day (September 19) recognized the 1870 campfire in Yellowstone around which the “national park idea” was supposed to have been first suggested. Each park was to have a celebration cantered around a campfire. Founders Day (August 25) marked the 1916 creation of the Park Service and is the only one of the three that continues to be observed by agency staff on a

²⁶⁸ Several versions of the slide show, sets of numbered slides, and at least one of the audio tapes are conserved in the National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

²⁶⁹ National Park Service, “Mission 66: Questions and Answers,” n.d. [1956], (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

regular basis (mostly in the Washington office). Establishment Day was to be celebrated by individual parks on the dates of their establishment.²⁷⁰

With the planning of Mission 66 completed, however, the reality of hundreds of millions of dollars of construction would soon determine exactly what Mission 66 was or was not. And what it was, above all, was a redefinition of how national parks would function as public places. The scores of Mission 66 prospectuses eventually prepared represented a new generation of park master planning, and a very different methodology for how that master planning was performed. Thomas Vint had described earlier, prewar Park Service master plans as “the counterpart of the city plan; everyone wants to get in the act, [and] the procedure calls for how they get in and out.”²⁷¹ But Vint had not developed the Mission 66 prospectus, nor the methodology of Mission 66 planning. Mission 66 prospectuses had been prepared in a manner more analogous to other public works projects of the 1950s, including the Interstate Highway program. No one (except arguably the AAA) had really gotten “in the act” at all. Mission 66 was a product of the planning culture of its day, and differed from prewar national park master plans that had reflected town and regional planning practices of that era. If prewar national park master planning had not included true public participation (in a more recent sense of that term), it was at least a longer and more deliberate process in which concessioners, mountaineering clubs, and local business interests all had more significant opportunities to influence decisions. Mission 66 demanded efficiency, speed, and apparently extreme discretion. Inspired by the multiple year funding awarded to highway and dam construction agencies, Mission 66 had to some degree imitated their technocratic approach to planning public works, an approach that was an antithesis of the consensus among conflicting interests that prewar park master plans had tried to achieve.²⁷²

Another reality would soon be inescapable as Mission 66 put its physical imprint on the national park system. Thomas Vint’s “Plan B”—removing overnight accommodations and administrative facilities from popular national park areas and converting those areas to day use only—may have inspired early articulations of Mission 66 policy, but it required removing the remnants of “Plan A” to succeed. Without the removal of older facilities, adding new developed areas, even if they were in less

²⁷⁰ Conrad L. Wirth to All National Park Service Personnel, January 3, 1956 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Department of the Interior, *1956 Annual Report*, 302.

²⁷¹ Herbert Evison, Interview with Thomas Vint, 1960, transcript, p. 10, (Thomas C. Vint Collection, Papers of Charles E. Peterson).

²⁷² For more on prewar Park Service master planning, see Carr, *Wilderness by Design*.

“sensitive” areas, did not solve the problem of overcrowding and encroachment on popular park attractions. And often nothing can be more difficult than removing any kind of public facility from a public park. Almost any building or service located in an important public landscape, once it has accumulated a group of users and economic interests, develops a constituency that opposes its removal. Because of the nature of congressional politics in rural areas (and the power of congressional subcommittees over Park Service budgets and operations), even small interest groups could prevent the removal of favourite facilities from a national park. “Plan B,” when combined with the perpetuation rather than the elimination of “Plan A,” would add up to a lot of park development.

The Mission 66 prospectus nevertheless embodied a new idea for how national parks should be managed. This new idea of national park planning acknowledged postwar trends, such as the rise in population, encroaching low density urbanization, new levels of automobile ownership, and the increased accessibility to parks created by federal-aid highway construction. Mission 66 concessioner developed areas, visitor centres, administrative areas, and housing subdivisions all reflected the influence of contemporary trends in American planning and design, from shopping centres to ranch houses. The overall tenor of Mission 66, like that of contemporary Interstate Highway and urban renewal programs, was imbued with the “new spirit” of mid-century modernism: old and haphazard developments would be replaced through more rationally conceived construction, serving larger numbers more efficiently. At the same time, Wirth and his planners took great pains to establish that although this was a new kind of national park planning, it was nevertheless grounded in the ideology and legislation of the early twentieth century. Again there was a parallel to a similar continuity in contemporary American housing and highway planning. Mission 66 illustrated the conceptual links between Progressive Era ideology and postwar modernist planning in the United States, generally.

As practiced by Wirth, Park Service professionals, and soon a large number of their consulting architects, Mission 66 embodied a peculiarly American form of mid-twentieth-century design: Mission 66 created a modernist national park. But while modernist architectural and planning ideas shaped Mission 66, this formal adoption did not imply a break with essentially Olmstedian justifications and goals for public park development. The assumption of modernist forms and design strategies, but not the more radical theory or intentions associated with its European precedents, typified postwar

American modernism. Corporate America did not intend its new suburban headquarters to be seen as endorsements of European socialism, and modernist shopping centres became the very temples of capitalist consumerism.

American modernist design adapted and evolved into a wide variety of responses to postwar social and geographic change. The Mission 66 park was one of those adaptations.²⁷³ The story of Mission 66 as it moved from conceptual planning to physical development would in fact be the story of the limits of modernism in American national park planning. Reactions to the program, as it was actually built, would be particularly rich indicators of public attitudes towards modernism and its perceived association with the destruction of historical “landmarks” and natural “wilderness.” Mission 66 soon incited deeply felt responses to the results of modernist planning and architecture, generally, both within and beyond park boundaries.

²⁷³ The term “modernist” is used throughout this study to refer to works of design influenced by twentieth-century architects and fine artists associated with modern, or modernist, movements. “Modernization” is used to refer to the application of technology and capital in the transformation of land in the modern historical era. Modern landscapes, in other words, are the products of modernization (including urbanization, mechanization of agriculture, industrialization, etc.); modernist landscapes are discreet works of twentieth-century design.

Chapter 10: Case Studies

10.1 Yosemite

In this chapter the administrative history of Mission 66 as described thus far is complemented by a series of examples intended to provide concrete instances of the results of Mission 66 in several significant cases. The thesis methodology emphasized site visits, and case studies therefore structured a significant portion of the research. These case studies are presented not as responses to individual research questions as much as vital illustrations of the policies and theory being described, and as instances and examples that clarify and illustrate the overall conclusions of the thesis.

The subject of preservation—and when it may be considered successful or not—permeated all aspects of planning and ultimately criticism of Mission 66. Preservation of nature has never been a passive act, and it has often been a creative and controversial process marked by unintended consequences. Nowhere has this been more true than in Yosemite Valley, a landscape that is a unique record of Euro-American experiments in the preservation of a “natural” landscape. Tourists and artists began to arrive in Yosemite in the 1850s and images of the valley’s scenery quickly created a sensation. Hidden in the remote Sierra Nevada, the landscape was considered the awesome essence of untrammelled, uncontrived nature. But of course people had managed, used, and occupied the landscape of Yosemite Valley for thousands of years. Several tribal groups burned the valley floor periodically, creating a landscape of open oak woodlands interspersed with meadows, productive for both forage crops (mainly acorns) and game. If left on its own, much of the valley might have been a mature coniferous forest rather than the “parklike” scene of meadows and oak groves that greeted tourists when they began to arrive. Although images of Yosemite Valley soon were the heart of an American ideal of nature, the landscape was actually an aboriginal countryside as managed, in its way, as the fields and farms of New England.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ See Robert Gibbens and Harold Heady, *The Influence of Modern Man on the Vegetation of Yosemite Valley* (California Agricultural Experiment Station Extension Service, Manual #36, 1964); M. Kathleen Anderson, “Southern Sierra Miwok Plant Resource Management of the Yosemite Region: A Study of the Biological, Ecological, and Cultural Bases for Indian Plant Gathering, Field Horticulture, and Anthropogenic Impacts on Sierra Vegetation.” Unpublished report (Yosemite National Park, 1989); Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 58-62; Land (cont.)

In 1864, the federal government granted Yosemite Valley to the state of California, with the stipulation that it remain forever open to the public for “public use, resort, and recreation.” Fees generated by concessions were to be applied to the “preservation and improvement” of the landscape, the two concepts clearly being seen as complementary aspects of creating what Frederick Law Olmsted described in 1865 as “the noblest park or pleasure ground in the world.”²⁷⁵ Intent on preserving the “natural” scene, the state authorized Yosemite Commission prevented tribal groups from burning off woody vegetation (considered a merely destructive practice) and otherwise largely prevented traditional access and uses of the land.²⁷⁶ To provide for their guests and livestock, hotel concessioners planted meadows in hay and established orchards and vegetable gardens. Agriculture, as well as the construction of roads and buildings, required improving the drainage of wet meadows, and drier soils soon further encouraged the growth of ponderosa pines and other woody growth in formerly open areas.

By the 1880s, the valley was in fact rapidly becoming a forest, and park managers and concessioners were cutting and pruning vegetation extensively to maintain the original, “natural” open meadows. Other observers, however, were horrified to see tree stumps, slash, or other byproducts of the work being undertaken. They felt that maintaining natural conditions surely precluded such active interference. The publication of George Perkins Marsh’s *Man and Nature* (1864, second edition 1874), the success of J. Sterling Morton’s suggestion for Arbour Day celebrations in the 1870s, and the establishment of the American Forestry Association in 1875, among other events and publications, all indicated a growing awareness for the need of some kind of protection for the rapidly disappearing trees of North America.²⁷⁷ Surely the trees of Yosemite Valley itself would be spared the fate being suffered by so many of the continent’s forests.

By 1888, Frederick Law Olmsted (the author of the 1865 set of recommendations for the management of the valley) was drawn into the controversy.²⁷⁸ Robert Underwood

and Community Associates, *Yosemite Valley: Cultural Landscape Report*. 2 vols. (Denver: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994); Thomas C. Blackburn and Kat Anderson, eds., *Before the Wilderness: Environmental Management by Native Californians* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1993).

²⁷⁵ For the text of the Yosemite Grant legislation, see Dilsaver, *America’s National Park System*, 11; also see Huth, “Yosemite.”

²⁷⁶ Mark David Spence, “Dispossessing the Wilderness: Yosemite Indians and the National Park Ideal, 1864-1930,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (February 1996), 27-59.

²⁷⁷ Huth, *Nature and the American*, 168-177.

²⁷⁸ That year Olmsted provided a statement to *The San Francisco Examiner*, suggesting that agriculture in the valley should be restricted to the areas already under production and that remaining natural meadows (cont.)

Johnson, a friend of Olmsted's and the editor of *Century* magazine, was particularly outraged by the evidence of tree removal at Yosemite and offered to bring the landscape architect back to California to make an assessment of the situation. Olmsted declined, citing other obligations; but his own ambivalence on the subject may have been another reason not to make the long journey from Brookline. Johnson and other national park advocates objected to almost any management of the Yosemite landscape. Olmsted agreed that the indiscriminate removal of young trees and shrubs would be a "calamity," but he also felt that the removal of trees in some cases would be justified. Olmsted issued a public letter in 1890 on "Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery," in which he reiterated that the "development and exhibition" of Yosemite scenery must be devised with "artistic refinement" if the landscape were to be preserved.²⁷⁹ For Olmsted, artistic intervention (in this case, the removal of certain trees) was required for the preservation of "natural" landscape conditions. He believed that subtle manipulation of the scenery would not make it less natural (at least not by his understanding of that word), and that inaction was the same as inappropriate action, in that it would ultimately result in the loss of Yosemite's unique landscape character.²⁸⁰

The negative effects of concessioner development in Yosemite Valley had also been condemned as early as the 1870s. The valley's remote location made transporting supplies expensive, and in order to serve their clientele early hotel operators drained, ploughed, and planted many of the valley's meadows. To protect their buildings they took steps to control flooding and suppress fires on the valley floor. Olmsted had foreseen how destructive such homesteading would be to the landscape and therefore urged the construction of an improved road all the way to the steamboat docks at Stockton. If transportation costs were lowered in this way, both tourists and supplies

should be "preserved." This meant that some tree cutting should be permitted, as long as it was under the supervision of someone with an artistic sensibility. Charles E. Beveridge, "Introduction to the Landscape Design Reports," in *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V, The California Frontier, 1863-1865*, Victoria Post Ranney, ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 467. In 1889, Olmsted (with J. B. Harrison) wrote a short discourse on the "use of the axe" in municipal parks, vigorously defending necessary thinning and other forestry practices in parks, although pointing out that "the management of a large park is an art," and indiscriminate or insensitive tree cutting could be more disastrous than no cutting at all. Frederick Law Olmsted and J. B. Harrison, "The Use of the Axe," [1888] reprinted in *Landscape Architecture* 3, no. 4 (July 1913): 145-152.

²⁷⁹ The letter never received wide circulation, but it was distributed within the Park Service in 1941 by the architect Herbert Maier, who at the time was the Region IV (western) Acting Director. "Region IV Circular," January 15, 1941, RG 79, Entry 37, Box 149, National Archives, Washington, DC.

²⁸⁰ Despite decades of sporadic clearing of vegetation, by 1942 the acreage of open meadows in the valley had been reduced by half. See Land and Community Associates, *Cultural Landscape Report*, figure Y-26. (cont.)

could be brought in and out cheaply, making it less necessary to cultivate the valley floor or to build elaborate overnight accommodations. Visiting Yosemite would also be more affordable for all. But Olmsted's report was suppressed by the park's first board of (state) commissioners, in part because it would have precluded potentially lucrative opportunities to build the hotels and other establishments that soon made Yosemite Valley a small resort town in the nineteenth century.

The larger Yosemite National Park was created around Yosemite Valley in 1890, and in 1906 the valley itself reverted to federal jurisdiction and became part of the national park. But the valley remained by far the principal attraction, and with the advent of automotive tourism complaints of overcrowding within its narrow confines became chronic. Stephen Mather's interest in the national park system, in fact, was first sparked by the scandalous conditions he found while visiting Yosemite Valley. The early policies he shaped for the Park Service attempted to correct the situation by reorganizing concession interests, by using concessioner capital to build the Ahwahnee and the Yosemite Lodge, and by planning a new Yosemite Village to replace the ramshackle "Old Village." The "All-Year" highway from the gateway town of El Portal into the valley was completed in 1926. The Park Service facilitated early automotive tourism, in other words, but also hopefully ameliorated its negative effects through planned developments that helped control how and where people drove, camped, hiked, swam, and enjoyed the scenery. This was what Thomas Vint described in the 1940s as "Plan A." But conditions of overcrowding in Yosemite Valley now promised to become impossible (fig. 33). Like Yellowstone, Yosemite was expected to record two million visits by 1966. But at Yellowstone those visitors would be spread over the hundreds of miles of roads and several major destination areas. At Yosemite, 95% of them were headed directly to the east end of the valley. For Vint, a radical change was in order, and he attempted to infuse Mission 66 with that new and controversial attitude. The inspiration for what became known as the "Vint Plan" (or "Plan B"), captured the true essence of Olmsted's 1865 report: make the valley a camping and day use destination, and rely on improved roads to get people and supplies in and out efficiently. Public access should not be restricted, and would not need to be, because the correct development plan would make it possible for millions to enjoy the landscape without destroying it.

Since the 1970s, such active management has again often been considered antithetical to maintaining "natural" conditions in the valley, although prescribed burning has been reintroduced in limited areas.

Park planning at Yosemite, however, has always involved many interest groups and many points of view. The Yosemite Park and Curry Company, for example, wielded great influence through its director, Donald B. Tressider, who in 1943 had stepped down to become president of Stanford University. Yosemite was also unique in that since 1928 it had its own Board of Expert Advisors (usually called simply the Advisory Board) made up of leading conservationists with tremendous experience. Over the years the three-member group included Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the architect and developer Duncan McDuffie, the geologist John P. Buwalda, and long time Sierra Club official William E. Colby. In August 1945, Drury challenged the Advisory Board to consider Vint's proposal to remove development from the valley. But in 1946 the Advisory Board reported that although it was "wholly in sympathy with the purposes of the Vint Plan," they could not endorse it. The valley was the "heart of the park" and the primary destination for almost all visitors. Removing the lodge and other public facilities seemed "too great a sacrifice to make." By 1947 the Advisory Board was involved in discussions of not whether the Yosemite Lodge should be rebuilt, but where in the valley and how large the new lodge should be.²⁸¹

In the spring of 1949, although Vint's master plan still called for the relocation of overnight accommodations, Drury approved designs for the reconstruction of the Yosemite Lodge in Yosemite Valley. The Yosemite concessioner was anxious to expand, and general manager Hilmer Oehlmann asked architect Eldridge Spencer to continue revising plans for a new lodge. Spencer and his wife, the designer Jeannette Spencer, already had long association with Yosemite. Jeannette Spencer had worked with Ansel Adams in the late 1920s designing the first Bracebridge pageants at the Ahwahnee. In the 1940s, she redesigned these seasonal celebrations and her husband oversaw the conversion of the Ahwahnee from naval hospital back to hotel. While the park's Mission 66 prospectus was still being prepared, Eldridge Spencer's plans for the new lodge (on the same site as the old lodge) were already complete. At that point, Oehlmann moved quickly to secure over \$1 million in bank financing and received approval to begin construction. The new Yosemite Lodge (fig. 9) opened in time for the 1956 season. Like the Canyon Lodge in Yellowstone, it featured a central service building with associated groups of motel units. Spencer designed a series of four low buildings with redwood

²⁸¹ At the time the Advisory Board consisted of Colby, Buwalda, and Duncan McDuffie. Minutes of the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, August 24-30, 1946; August 23-29, 1947; n.d. [August, 1949] (Yosemite National Park Archives). Also see Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 189-192.

sheathing, connected by covered walkways. Projecting eaves, large windows, and few ornamental details gave the complex a “contemporary” look. Some of the older cabins were retained in the new complex, and other motel units were later added, more than doubling the concessioner’s investment. Since it was a redevelopment of an existing lodge (and remained close to the visitor facilities of Yosemite Village), it did not require extensive construction for utilities, roads, or other new services.²⁸²

Eldridge Spencer is best known today for his extensive work for the Yosemite concessioner, particularly during Mission 66. Wirth and other Park Service officials admired Spencer’s work, and in 1956 Rockefeller’s Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., hired him to lay out the Colter Bay development in Grand Teton National Park, a concession cabin and camping area that was intended to complement the services at the Jackson Lake Lodge.²⁸³ Guided by Mission 66 plans, Yosemite concessioners also made significant investments to redevelop Yosemite Village at this time. In 1958 Degnan’s store moved into a dramatic A-frame structure in the centre of the village, and a “merchandise centre” (including a market, clothing store, restaurant, and barber shop) was completed in the winter of 1959 (fig.34). Designed by Spencer, the building cost the Yosemite Park and Curry Company over \$800,000. Spencer also designed staff residences, a large warehouse, and other buildings. By the spring of 1959, the redevelopment of Yosemite Village allowed the Park Service to finish the demolition the Old Village (on the other side of the Merced River), which had been a goal since the first new village plans were devised in 1914. That May, Wirth, Spencer, the park concessioner, and others celebrated the opening of the merchandise centre, which was the centrepiece of the expanded Yosemite Village. In 1967 Spencer designed a large visitor centre for the Park Service, completing the transformation of the area.²⁸⁴

Concessioner developments were only a small part of Mission 66, but they had great impact on public perceptions of the program during its first years. For early critics of Mission 66, the construction of “motel-type” lodges confirmed their fears that the Park Service had made too many compromises—or perhaps had never been on the right track

²⁸² Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 187; Shirley Sargent, *Yosemite’s Innkeepers: The Story of a Great Park and Its Chief Concessionaires* (Yosemite, California: Ponderosa Press, 2000), 134, 148.

²⁸³ The Colter Bay development eventually included a visitor centre, cafeteria, stores, trailer camping area, and eighty-five cabins (a number of which had been moved from other locations in the park). Colter Bay had its own detractors, who deplored its visible lakeshore location and its facilities for power boat access to Jackson Lake.

²⁸⁴ Conrad L. Wirth to Eldridge T. Spencer, April 18, 1958 (Box 7, Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives); Sargent, *Yosemite’s Innkeepers*, 146-148.

at all—in facing the challenges presented by postwar automotive tourism. At Yosemite (as well as Yellowstone) a new and expanded park lodge was the first substantial construction project begun under Mission 66.

The redevelopment of the Yosemite Lodge and Yosemite Village created exactly the kind of “drift” towards overdevelopment that Vint feared, but aspects of the 1945 “Vint Plan” for the valley survived and were incorporated into the park’s Mission 66 prospectus. Just as Mission 66 planning got underway, the Park Service had acquired 972 acres at the western entrance to the park, including the small former mining settlement of El Portal. Describing the acquisition as “a dream come true,” the prospectus called for a major relocation of valley administrative offices, staff residences, and maintenance buildings to a new “operating base” to be located there. Many Park Service families had lived in El Portal for years, but the area was now to be expanded into a “model community” with all necessary services. The development of El Portal would allow one of the primary goals described in the draft prospectus: to “move facilities out of Yosemite Valley...leaving only those facilities which are necessary and essential.” Early drafts of the prospectus had a particularly preservationist tone. The first objective cited was the “freezing of developments...not to exceed their present capacity.” Final (1957) versions of the prospectus specified that “all accommodations for visitors and related services shall be limited to designated areas” and would not be allowed to sprawl beyond the established footprint of development. The Park Service and its concessioners could no longer “continue to build, construct and develop operating facilities on the Valley floor without seriously impairing and ultimately destroying” the unique landscape.²⁸⁵

These injunctions to freeze development obviously did not pertain to the redevelopment of the Yosemite Lodge and Yosemite Village, projects already underway thanks to concessioner capital. But even if the valley’s “pillow count” (including campgrounds) remained at about 4,500, the prospectus acknowledged that the valley’s day capacity would need to be expanded. “An adequate road and trail system; adequate facilities for the comfort and welfare of the visitor; and effective presentation and interpretation of the diversified resources of Yosemite” were all considered necessary to handle the anticipated influx. For its part the Park Service planned to spend over \$22 million for road improvements, campgrounds, and other facilities throughout the park.

²⁸⁵ “Yosemite Valley and Mission 66,” draft prospectus, n.d. (National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center); “Mission 66 for Yosemite National Park,” prospectus, July 9, 1957 (National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center).

To alleviate crowding in the valley, alternative destinations would be expanded. “Trailer courts” were planned for El Portal and Wawona. A “pioneer interpretive and information centre” was developed at Wawona, involving the relocation of historic structures from different areas of the park into a “pioneer village.” The number of campsites inside the valley was to remain at 2,500, but outside the valley campgrounds would be tripled to 2,400 sites. The potential of redirecting visitors to the Yosemite high country, along the Tioga Road corridor, was of particular interest. The White Wolf Lodge area was to be expanded, enhancing it as an alternative overnight destination. Soon there were plans for an enlarged campground and visitor centre at Tuolumne Meadows, as well, further relieving visitor pressure on the valley. “Perhaps no other area in the National Park System...[was] confronted with more difficult and complex problems” as Yosemite, the prospectus planners noted. “The preservation and protection of the incomparable Yosemite Valley” was the foremost and most difficult problem of all.²⁸⁶

10.2 Yellowstone

Mission 66 construction was funded mainly, but not exclusively, by greatly enhanced appropriations. Many national park concession contracts renegotiated under Mission 66 also required concessioners to make large capital investments. Between 1956 and 1966 park concessioners invested \$33 million in new overnight accommodations, restaurants, and park stores, which was about \$14 million less than called for in the 1956 Mission 66 final report. Concessioner investments had greater impacts than the figures suggest, however, because they resulted in some of the highest profile, earliest Mission 66 construction projects. Concessioners hired their own architects and could initiate work quickly once they secured financing. Their facilities also were heavily used by the public and strongly affected early perceptions of Mission 66. And almost all overnight accommodations—the “motel type” park lodges that quickly became controversial—were built through the investment of private capital. But the economics and business models for park concessioning changed rapidly in the postwar period. Park concessions had always been a vital factor in American national park management, and the changing relationship between the privately run hotels, restaurants, and other service in the parks and the Park Service influenced Mission 66 from its inception.

²⁸⁶ “Mission 66 for Yosemite National Park,” prospectus, July 9, 1957 (National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center).

As passenger rail service to parks ended, railroad companies lost interest in financing concession companies. At the same time, massive investments were needed, at least if concessioners were to continue in anything like their traditional role. Patterns of travel and recreation now were dominated by automotive tourism at a greatly increased scale. The situation seemed to require replacing older hotels, which had been built for railroad and early automotive tourism, with "motel-type" park lodges, which would more efficiently serve larger numbers of tourists (and their cars) and provide the "modern conveniences" the public demanded. Under these pressures, many concessions that had originally been family businesses or railroad subsidiaries began to reorganize or sell out, often to larger businesses that specialized in hotel and restaurant management. In 1954 the Santa Fe Railroad abandoned its businesses on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, for example, donating many of its utility buildings to the government and selling its interest in El Tovar and the Bright Angel Lodge to the reorganized Fred Harvey Company. The Yosemite Park and Curry Company went through a series of management changes in the 1940s and 1950s, and the Great Northern Railroad sold out at Glacier National Park in 1960. Political and financial difficulties with the concession system persisted throughout Mission 66. After 1956, Congress required its own review and approval of all park concession contracts involving gross annual incomes over \$100,000. Banks, which replaced railroad companies as a source of capital to finance improvements, were cautious about making loans secured only by possessory interest. In 1960 the Park Service prepared legislation that would have provided federal mortgage guarantees for concessioners, and the next year suggested the creation of a special federal fund to finance development directly. Neither scheme was enacted. Congress again conducted investigations into the concession system in 1962, and that year the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission recommended continuing the system of private construction and ownership "where feasible." In 1965 Congress passed the Concession Policy Act, which finally gave legislative recognition to possessory interest and the preferential renewal of contracts.²⁸⁷ Once these rights were assured, banks more readily loaned money against the future earning potential of contracts. But at least some

²⁸⁷ A. C. Stratton to Conrad L. Wirth, "Concessioners' Mortgage Guarantees," memorandum, April 18, 1960 (Box 5, Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives); Hummel, *Stealing the National Parks*, 182, 185, 192; Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 180; Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Outdoor Recreation for America: A Report to the President and to Congress by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 164.

concessioners had difficulties securing loans to meet their investment obligations under Mission 66.

In 1953, 173 national park concessions grossed \$32 million. Total concessioner assets were reported at \$60 million in 1957.²⁸⁸ When Wirth and his policy makers began Mission 66 planning, they never seriously considered abandoning the park concession system, despite its inherent problems. Such an effort would have been unlikely to succeed at a time when concessioners had just organized to protect their interests. The Eisenhower administration also sought to expand the role of the private sector, not eliminate it. But the Mission 66 policy memoranda and the “pilot prospectus” developed for Mount Rainier implied radical change for park concessions, nevertheless. Converting parks from overnight destinations to day use parks suggested many older park hotels would be bought out and demolished as contracts expired. In cases where visitors could easily find accommodations outside park boundaries, there would be no need for park lodges. The 1956 Mission 66 report stated that overnight concession services would be provided “only in those areas where required for proper and appropriate park experience, and where those services cannot be furnished satisfactorily in neighbouring communities.”²⁸⁹ This goal conflicted directly with the interests of concessioners, for whom overnight stays were often considered desirable and even necessary aspects of their business models. Motel rooms made greater profits than stores, restaurants, and snack bars. Overnight accommodations also assured longer visits, which in turn increased business for these other services. The public also had expectations of not just visiting parks, but staying overnight at or near favourite park destinations.

The political influence and contractual rights of park concessioners, combined often with the expectations of park visitors, made it difficult to remove overnight accommodations in many parks. In June of 1955, Wirth had already begun to modify the tone of Mission 66 policy in this regard. The first of the “principles” distributed that month to guide the preparation of pilot prospectuses was to assure “greater participation of private enterprise.” In part, this meant that demand for visitor services would be met by private businesses outside park boundaries; but it also was an assurance that new concessioner investments would be a major feature of Mission 66. The second principle listed in the memorandum stated that the relocation of overnight facilities away from

²⁸⁸ Everhart, *The National Park Service*, 119; Ise, *National Park Policy*, 615.

²⁸⁹ “Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use,” January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

“major park features” would be required in many cases. This policy stopped far short of suggesting that all hotels be removed from parks. Every situation would be considered “on its own merits,” and while in some cases overnight concessions might indeed be removed, in others they would merely be relocated, and in fact “recommended for considerable expansion.”²⁹⁰

The June 1955 “principles” not only reflected the political realities of dealing with the park concession system, but were also influenced by events already underway as Mission 66 was being planned. At Yellowstone, in particular, negotiations over the critical and expansive role of the park’s concessioner would affect the future of the entire Mission 66 program. Since at least 1948, the year Yellowstone broke the one-million visitor mark, Park Service officials had plans for a complete modernization of the park roads and overnight facilities. But neither Congress nor the embattled concessioner, William Nichols, could be convinced to make such investments at the time. Negotiations at Yellowstone reached a critical point in the spring of 1955, just as Mission 66 planning got underway. With the Yellowstone Park Company’s twenty-year contract set to expire at the end of the year, Wirth and the park’s staff clearly hoped that Nichols would soon be replaced, possibly by several new concessioners, more willing to invest.

The situation at Yellowstone illustrated the already longstanding difficulties of trying to cope with vastly increased numbers of visitors at a time when neither Congress nor park concessioners were willing to invest in new development. In 1948 one million visitors came to the park, up from 20,000 in 1920. The increase consisted almost entirely of people in their own cars, who set their own agendas at hotels and campgrounds, and who increasingly found their own accommodations in towns outside park entrances. In 1948 Drury reported that “new development” was needed throughout the park system, but especially at Yellowstone. He claimed that the Old Faithful area was at “the saturation point” and the facilities at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone were “obsolete.” He proposed two new developed areas, West Thumb and Canyon Village, to be financed by combined concessioner and government funds. Drury backed the expansion of the Lake and Fishing Bridge areas and proposed a three million-dollar “administration-museum building” for Mammoth Hot Springs. To make the Grand Loop road system adequate for projected traffic volumes, he estimated a thirteen million-dollar road modernization

²⁹⁰ “Informational Memorandum No. 3, Mission 66, Progress and Procedures,” June 27, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

program would be required.²⁹¹ But Drury knew none of this would happen. In 1948 park concessioners were battling the Department of the Interior over the terms of new contracts and, for the time being, avoiding any new investments. Congress was preoccupied with the reconstruction of Europe and political turmoil in Asia. In contrast to a \$20 million redevelopment program just for Yellowstone, construction in the entire park system totalled under \$1 million that year.

The oldest and, at the time, largest national park, Yellowstone had always been the showcase of Park Service policies. But by the early 1950s the condition of visitor services—and the long delay in addressing them—were a national scandal. Wirth had begun to reform and centralize concession management when he became director in 1951, and he attempted to convince the Yellowstone Park Company to invest millions of dollars in new development as part of a contract renegotiation. But he and the concessioner, William M. Nichols (the son-in-law of the company's founder, Harry W. Child) could not reach an agreement on the terms of such investments. Nichols business situation had become more difficult in the 1940s. Railroad companies that in the past had made loans to the concessioner were now in the process of reducing and terminating passenger rail service to Yellowstone. The companies no longer had any reason to finance visitor accommodations, and regular banks balked at the notion of making large loans secured only by hotels that, because of their locations, technically had their titles vested in the United States. Under the circumstances, Nichols was searching (unsuccessfully) for a buyer for his family's business. Nichols was in his seventies, worried about the future of his family's business, and in no mood to sink any remaining assets into new construction.²⁹²

As the situation deteriorated, a group of Wyoming businessmen and elected officials organized an effort buy and assume control of the Yellowstone Park Company, effectively asserting state control over this critical aspect of the federal park's management. On February 14, 1955, just a week after Wirth initiated Mission 66 planning, the Wyoming Legislature passed a bill that would have authorized the state's acquisition of the Yellowstone concessions. Although such an action would have seriously undermined the Park Service's jurisdiction, there was no official response from Wirth or from the Department of the Interior; the proposal quickly sank under the weight

²⁹¹ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1948 Annual Report*, 320-321.

²⁹² Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*. 2 vols. (Boulder: Yellowstone Library and Museum Association in cooperation with Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), vol. 2, 372.

of inherent legal and procedural difficulties, in any case. But the situation no doubt contributed to the “crisis” Wirth perceived that February, adding to the urgency with which Mission 66 was planned, particularly for Yellowstone.²⁹³

At about the time Mission 66 planning began, Wirth also organized a separate “working group” on the “concessioner needs” for Yellowstone. The Yellowstone Park Company’s twenty-year contract was set to expire at the end of 1955, and Wirth anticipated the opportunity to require major capital investments as part of any new contract, whether with Nichols or a new concessioner. Headed by a special assistant, Phillip F. King, the concessions group included Yellowstone Superintendent Edmund B. Rogers, Park Landscape Architect Frank E. Mattson, Chief Ranger Otto M. Brown, and Chief Naturalist David de L. Condon. Their week-long meeting also involved members of the recently formed Mission 66 committees. The group debated the most basic assumptions about how Yellowstone should function as a public park. Should overnight accommodations in the park be continued, and if so under one or several concession contracts? Should increased demand instead be met by private businesses outside the park? Should older hotels in the park be “abandoned and removed” and replaced by “motel type” lodgings in less sensitive areas?²⁹⁴

The concessions group met while the Mission 66 planners were drafting their first policy statements; the two discussions overlapped and, judging by the results, influenced one another (figs. 35-38). The Yellowstone group concluded that there was still a need for several developed areas with accommodations within the park, and in fact they recommended greatly expanding overnight visitor capacity, from roughly 8,000 to 14,000. But they added that this expansion should never be exceeded, and that thereafter surrounding towns should meet any further demand for lodging. No new hotels should be built in the park since the public had shown a “decided preference for motel type accommodations.” The new motels would be financed by issuing “prospectuses” that would invite private applicants to build and operate lodges in several areas of the park,

²⁹³ Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 373; Mark Daniel Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 117-119.

²⁹⁴ The group also included head of Yellowstone concessions management, Benjamin F. Dickson, and a young Park Service lawyer named George B. Hartzog, Jr. “Determination of National Park Service Objectives in its Concessioner Contracts at Yellowstone for the Next Twenty Years,” n.d. [handwritten date, “Feb. 55”] (Entry A1, Box 16, RG 79, National Archives). The group’s recommendations were written up in a slightly different version in a memorandum by park staff to Wirth that April. See Mary Shivers Culpin, *For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People, A History of Concession Development in Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1966* (National Park Service: Yellowstone Centre for Resources, YCR-CR-2003-01, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 2003), 105-107.

preferably under separate concession contracts, with limited rights of preferential renewal.²⁹⁵

The concession plan specified that the Lake-Fishing Bridge area was to be enlarged, but that the boat docks were to be moved to a new development at nearby Bridge Bay. Bridge Bay would also include a new lodge. At West Thumb, landscape architect Mattson had advocated since at least 1946 relocating development that encroached on the geyser basin, and with Vint's help and support, planned a new visitor complex about a mile to the south, to be called Thumbay (later Grant Village).²⁹⁶ At Old Faithful, the Old Faithful Inn and the roads around it would be razed, again to eliminate the "encroachment upon thermal features," and a new and expanded developed area to be sited nearby was to be named Wonderland (later Firehole Village) and be sited near Mallard Lake. The Mammoth Hot Springs area was to have its overnight capacity reduced "with the objective of the [nearby] town of Gardiner taking up the slack." At the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, again the existing lodge and cabins would be demolished replaced by a new Canyon Village sited farther away from the canyon rim. The new village, which had first been planned in 1935, was a priority for Park Service planners because it could accommodate increased numbers without encroaching further on the rim of the canyon, where visitors traditionally enjoyed some of the most dramatic scenery in the park.²⁹⁷

Throughout Yellowstone, the concession planning group recommended expanding park overnight accommodations and visitor services by demolishing old hotels and tourist cabins and replacing them with larger developments farther away from geysers, important vistas, and other "sensitive areas." While the group recommended building several extensive new motel complexes, they also emphasized that these plans represented the ultimate development of the park. If demand for overnight accommodations continued to grow, motels outside park boundaries would have to meet it. The overall pattern of use of the park, represented by the Grand Loop road system, should remain and be modernized,

²⁹⁵ The use of the term "prospectus" in this case may have suggested the term "Mission 66 prospectus" subsequently used for all Mission 66 development plans. Earlier the concessioner Nichols had also used the term to describe his own development proposals. "Determination of National Park Service Objectives in its Concessioner Contracts at Yellowstone for the Next Twenty Years," n.d. [handwritten date, "Feb. 55"] (Entry A1, Box 16, RG 79, National Archives).

²⁹⁶ Robin Smith, "The History of Grant Village," unpublished report, 1988 (Vertical Files, Yellowstone National Park Archives), 18.

²⁹⁷ "Determination of National Park Service Objectives in its Concessioner Contracts at Yellowstone for the Next Twenty Years," n.d. [handwritten date, "Feb. 55"] (Entry A1, Box 16, RG 79, National Archives). Also see Culpin, *For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People*, 107-116.

but not expanded. These priorities mirrored the fundamental tenets of Mission 66, which were being drafted at the time. From the beginning, the success or failure of the overall Mission 66 was linked to the fate of the new Yellowstone concession contracts and park redevelopment program. Under these circumstances, Yellowstone served as a flagship of Mission 66 planning, design, and policy.²⁹⁸

In April 1955, Superintendent Rogers and his staff were in Washington for a week-long discussion on the Mission 66 pilot prospectus for their park. Again there was a consensus that popular and sensitive destinations, especially Old Faithful and the Mammoth Hot Springs, were being overwhelmed. The Mission 66 committee agreed with the general ideas of the concession working group—which reflected the emerging philosophy of Mission 66 generally—that older developed areas should in many cases be demolished and replaced by more expansive facilities sited in less “sensitive” areas, or outside the park altogether. The initial prospectus resembled the recommendation of the concession group (although a minority of Mission 66 staff also wanted more development removed from Fishing Bridge because of the area’s ecological significance). Most of the staff felt camping facilities and day use areas should be greatly expanded, but they did not want “trailer courts” in the park, although they acknowledged that a maximum of one would need to be provided somewhere. They acknowledged an earlier study on the benefits of moving park headquarters out of the park to the nearby town of Gardiner, but the park staff and superintendent nevertheless insisted that park administration remain at Mammoth. The steering committee requested an inventory of tourist accommodations, campgrounds, and other recreation areas within 100 miles of Yellowstone’s entrances. There was also a general sentiment expressed that the park concessioner should be replaced.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ “Determination of National Park Service Objectives in its Concessioner Contracts at Yellowstone for the Next Twenty Years,” n.d. [handwritten date, “Feb. 55”] (Entry A1, Box 16, RG 79, National Archives). This planning document states emphatically that while overnight capacity should be increased to “about 14,000 people,” in the future any additional need for accommodations should be “absorbed...in communities adjacent to the park.” Later Yellowstone prospectuses were consistent with this recommendation.

²⁹⁹ Edmund B. Rogers to Conrad L. Wirth, “MISSION 66, First Submission Prospectus,” memorandum, November 10, 1955 (Entry A1, Box 16, RG 79, National Archives); “Mission 66 Prospectus,” 1957 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Appleman, “A History of the Mission 66 Program,” 37-45. A 1945 report claimed that half a million dollars could be saved annually without loss of efficiency by moving park headquarters out of the park to Gardiner. Fred T. Johnston to Edmund B. Rogers, memorandum, January 9, 1945; “Mission 66, Recreation Inventories,” May 6, 1955, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

As Yellowstone historian Aubrey L. Haines observes, Nichols was “in a mood to sell out” in 1955 but had not found a buyer. But now he needed to renew his contract if his family’s franchise were to remain saleable, and the terms of any new contract would mean becoming a full, if reluctant, partner in the implementation of Mission 66.³⁰⁰ That August, Nichols secured a large bank loan and hired Welton Becket and Associates of Los Angeles to assemble proposals for three developed areas with motel complexes and other services. The proposed developments followed the outline of the draft Mission 66 prospectus for the park, which in turn were reflected in preliminary site designs from the park’s master plan. A new developed area named Canyon Village would replace the Canyon Hotel, a massive wooden structure that encroached on the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Thumbay (renamed Grant Village in 1956 for Ulysses S. Grant) would enlarge and replace facilities considered too close to the West Thumb geyser basin. Bridge Bay was planned for an area near the Lake Hotel, again in order to expand capacity and allow the removal of some older development, in this case in the Fishing Bridge and Lake areas.³⁰¹ As Wirth prepared to unveil Mission 66 at the Smoky Mountains conference that September, the Yellowstone concessioner and his architect presented plans and received preliminary approval to proceed. That spring, Nichols signed a new a twenty-year contract based on an initial commitment of \$3.5 million to develop Canyon Village with 500 motel units, employee dormitories, and a lodge building that housed a cafeteria, restaurant, and other services. On June 25, 1956, just days before the new fiscal year initiated the first official (government) spending on Mission 66 construction, Canyon Village became the first Mission 66 project to break ground. It was scheduled on a “fast track” to be opened the following summer. Indeed, the Park Service had already completed site preparation, including roads and utilities, and the contractor was working off site on prefabricated motel units (figs. 39, 40).

Wirth made the Canyon Village groundbreaking ceremony the first of many celebrations of Mission 66 progress. He also used the event to publicize the final version of the Mission 66 prospectus for Yellowstone, which had been delayed pending the

³⁰⁰ Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 375-376. The concessioner’s reluctance to enter into his investment obligations was expressed, for example, in a long letter to the park superintendent that June, shortly after the new contract had been signed. W. M. Nichols to Edmund B. Rogers, June 15, 1956 (Box A248, Yellowstone National Park Archives).

³⁰¹ By 1957 Wirth and Garrison had backed away from the other initially proposed development, “Firehole Village,” that would have replaced the inn and lodge at Old Faithful. “Draft Mission 66 Prospectus Brief,” August 28, 1957 (Mission 66 Prospectus Files, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

results of negotiations with Nichols. In anticipation of two million annual visits by 1966 (the actual figure would be only slightly higher), the 1956 prospectus called for \$17.5 million in government spending and a total concessioner investment of \$13.5 million over ten years. After Lon Garrison took over as Yellowstone superintendent the next year, the estimates were revised upwards to \$55 million and \$15 million, respectively. The prospectus also “anticipated” an increase in the park’s operations budget from \$1.5 million to \$2.2 million over the same period. On the government side, the number of campground sites would be increased from 490 to 1,420, serving up to 6,000 campers at a time. Relocated and enlarged, the new campgrounds would feature amphitheatres, coordinated interpretive displays and activities, and modern comfort stations, and utilities. Several “rental trailer courts” would finally be built, despite the misgivings of Park Service staff. The Grand Loop road system would not be extended (neither would it be significantly curtailed), but it would be widened and modernized everywhere. Many bridges were to be replaced, and some sections of roadway were to be relocated away from sensitive areas, such as Old Faithful and the shore of Yellowstone Lake. Several new visitor centres (including one at Canyon Village) and entrance stations would be built, and interpretive displays, trails, and signage would be erected in every developed area. Parking and roadside areas would be expanded, and some fifty new picnic areas were planned. Staffing would be increased, and the critical dearth of park housing would be addressed. Maintenance and shop buildings would be funded, and sewerage, powerlines, and other utilities would be constructed throughout the park.

On the concessioner side, the total capacity for overnight accommodations in the park would rise from about 8,000 to about 14,000, beginning with the motel complex at Canyon Village. Garrison pointed out that visitors needed to stay in the park “at least a week” to fully appreciate it, therefore overnight accommodations in the park were still considered necessary. If they were still required, then they would also have to be expanded, just like the other facilities in the park, to serve the roughly twice as many visitors expected in 1966. But the new park “lodges” would not be “fancy hotels,” such as the Old Faithful Inn. The public wanted motels that were “simple, but as comfortable and convenient as possible.” They were not to be attractions in themselves but a “means to an end” that would not compete with—or encroach on—the natural wonders of the park. The existing hotels would “remain during their useful life,” but then they would be demolished along with their associated roads and development as new motels were completed. Stores, gas stations, and other commercial buildings would complement the

motels. "Cafeterias, lunch counters, and coffee shop services" would be provided instead of expensive restaurants. All of this would be done, Wirth promised in his remarks at the groundbreaking, "without intrusion upon the sacred areas of scenic beauty and natural wonders, or the wilderness appeal of this vast area. In fact, the greatest contribution MISSION 66 will make to Yellowstone is the restoration, insofar as possible, of the natural setting in these [older hotel] areas."³⁰²

The Yellowstone prospectus described an entirely new "development pattern," for the park, one that had been conceived around the reality of high volume, middle class automotive tourism, and the decision that overnight accommodations were still necessary within park boundaries. Canyon Village became the first example of "motel-type" concessioner lodgings planned as part of an entirely new, Mission 66 developed area. The project had been on the boards, however, for at least twenty years. Park Service officials had long considered the Canyon Hotel and the structures near it to be egregious intrusions on some of the most treasured scenery in the park. The developed area included the massive hotel itself (1911), but also a store, cafeteria, campgrounds, horse corrals, and dozens of cabins, all clustered on both sides of the Grand Canyon immediately around the best points for viewing the spectacular Upper and Lower falls of the Yellowstone. Park staff, working with Vint's office, had made the removal of the Canyon Hotel and the development around it part of their master plans since 1935. At that time they suggested developing a new park village nearby that could provide services in a less conspicuous way. The basic concept was comparable to the plans made ten years earlier for replacing the "Old Village" in Yosemite Valley with the new Yosemite Village. But in the early 1920s, when Vint helped then chief landscape architect Daniel R. Hull plan Yosemite Village, they chose the new site, in part, because of its commanding views of Yosemite Falls and other famous features. The new Yosemite Village "harmonized" by being a picturesque element of the stunning landscape scenes around it in the heart of the valley.³⁰³ Ten years later at Yellowstone, Vint and the

³⁰² "MISSION 66 PROGRAM FOR YELLOWSTONE...", press release, June 24, 1956 (Box A248, Yellowstone National Park Archives); "Address by Conrad L. Wirth...Canyon Village," prepared remarks, June 25, 1956 (Box 6, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); "Draft Mission 66 Prospectus Brief," March 21, 1957 (Mission 66 Prospectus Files, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); "Draft Mission 66 Prospectus Brief," August 28, 1957 (Mission 66 Prospectus Files, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³⁰³ It is also true that by keeping the new Yosemite Village in a relatively compact form in the east end of the valley, views of the west end of the valley (including those from Inspiration and Discovery points) remained unaffected. The site selected for the new village also did not encroach on the historic scenic views of the valley, as shown by later park planners through their analysis of nineteenth and early (cont.)

Yellowstone staff again sought to replace “poorly planned” development with a new park village. But in this case the plans indicated a growing concern for more complete protection of park scenery, a change typical of Vint’s attitudes by the late 1930s. The site for the new Canyon Village had no significant views, but it did have the virtue of being completely screened by stands of lodgepole pine. The awesome and “sensitive” scenery of the canyon could therefore be restored, at least visually, to “natural” conditions.

Park Service regional staff, together with park landscape architect Frank Matson, devised the plans for Canyon Village, which Wirth and Vint (as always) reviewed in detail. The development was located about a mile away from the rim of the canyon, at an important crossroads. In Yellowstone’s Grand Loop road system, a single transverse road connected the geyser basins on the west side of the loop to the canyon area on the east side. Canyon Village was planned around the intersection (“Canyon Crossing”) on the east side. In postwar versions of the proposed plan, the intersection itself divided the developed area into functional zones: central parking and motel complex, campgrounds, and Park Service maintenance. A gas station was sited directly at the intersection, which also featured turning lanes in all directions. By the early 1950s, the central plaza was described in master plan drawings as the “parking lot,” with a new lodge and other public buildings forming a horseshoe around three sides of it.³⁰⁴ Park village planning was gradually transforming into a more efficient, automobile oriented form. While it had clearly developed from earlier park village design, the need to efficiently accommodate larger numbers of cars, larger campgrounds, and up to 500 motel units led to a more decentralized, sprawling plan. Every aspect of the development was predicated on the universal and pervasive use of automobiles.

In its location, scale, layout, and functionality, the early 1950s Park Service design for the Canyon Village began to resemble a contemporary shopping centre complex. It did so mainly in order to channel and efficiently serve large numbers of automotive tourists in one, strategic location, and therefore minimize their impact on scenery. The subsequent choice of a proven shopping centre designer as the consulting architect for the

twentieth-century paintings and photographs (see the “Historic Viewpoint Analysis” of the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, General Management Plan, Yosemite National Park*, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1978, 102-106). But the central public buildings of Yosemite Village were intended to be seen in the context of their extraordinary setting. The major public space (“plaza”) of the village was surrounded by the rustic façades of the museum, administration, and other buildings, with dramatic views of Yosemite Falls, Sentinel Rock, Half Dome, and other features of the surrounding cliff walls in the background.

project, however, indicated how the Yellowstone Park Company (and perhaps the Los Angeles bank lending millions of dollars) perceived the economic potential of the situation. Welton Becket was a pioneer in the design of postwar retail complexes in California. The Stonestown Shopping Centre in San Francisco was an early and influential success for his office in 1949, and subsequently he planned many similar projects based on the model of “stores clustered around a central mall.”³⁰⁵ At Canyon Village, Becket designed the central lodge building with a massive, shingled roof with eaves that extended down, beyond the extensively glazed walls. Dramatic “glu-lam” roof beams extended beyond the eaves all the way down to concrete anchors set in the ground, forming a covered arcade around the exterior of the building. The prefabricated motel units, laid out along access drives behind the lodge, were assembled in attached, radial clusters. Of inexpensive construction with rectangular plans and flat roofs, the motel units were unexceptional, but convenient, and equipped with modern utilities. Two other park concessioners who invested in Canyon Village also hired Becket to design their buildings, the Hamilton Store and the Haynes Photographic Shop. Becket used the same materials and pitched roofs in these buildings as in the lodge, creating a unified visual theme. All the larger buildings of the complex featured high ceilings and extensive, open floor space. The buildings featured little or no ornamental detail, and were similarly economical in their construction, which consisted of “slump block” precast concrete units, stone veneer over concrete, and wood framing and sheathing. The massive, asymmetrically pitched roofs, and unusually shaped, large windows (especially in the gable ends of buildings) gave Canyon Village a “contemporary” look. In 1958 the Park Service built a new visitor centre in a complementary style, directly across the plaza from the lodge at the main public entrance to the horseshoe plaza.³⁰⁶

The Park Service completed site improvements at Canyon Village with a broad sidewalk connecting the main buildings, and with long islands planted with naturalized groups of native trees and shrubs in the parking lot. The planted islands separated and screened individual parking corridors, breaking up and concealing the lot’s full extent.

³⁰⁴ “Canyon Regional Plan,” 1952 Yellowstone National Park Master Plan, (Yellowstone National Park Archives).

³⁰⁵ Becket was also well known by the 1950s for large office and hotel buildings for corporate clients, including the Hilton Hotel chain. His office was on its way to becoming one of the largest in the country. See Welton Becket, “Shopping Centre Traffic Problems,” *Traffic Quarterly* 9 (April 1955): 162-172; William Ducley Hunt, Jr., *Total Design: Architecture of Welton Becket and Associates* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972).

Park Service landscape architects also laid out an extensive campground, already opened in the summer of 1956, which Wirth was able to point to at the groundbreaking ceremony as an indication of things to come elsewhere in the park. Sewers, water and electric lines, roads, and lighting all were completed by Park Service contractors as the concessioner's builders went to work. The entire complex was, Wirth remarked hopefully at that time, a demonstration of "the ability of private capital to work in harmonious cooperation with the Federal Government to provide for the betterment of the parks." Indeed, with the concessioner supposedly committed to shouldering a significant portion of the cost of modernizing Yellowstone, Wirth had reason to feel the Canyon Village groundbreaking was a major success. Newspapers from San Francisco to Denver picked up on the enthusiasm of the day, impressed by the extent of the commitment of private capital, as well as the breadth and ambition of the redevelopment plans for the nation's oldest national park (figs. 41-45).³⁰⁷

But if the Canyon Village ground breaking launched the construction phase of Mission 66 optimistically, the subsequent construction and operation of the Canyon Lodge ran into trouble from the start. Nichols had secured bank funding and hired an eminent architectural firm, but his Yellowstone Park Company, a family directed business that had been in the park since 1891, proved incapable of supervising construction on such a large project. By the end of the summer, bank financing had to be increased to \$5 million because of cost overruns. That fall Nichols stepped down as the head of the Yellowstone Park Company in favour of his son, and the company board was reorganized to include non-family members. The next summer the official opening of the lodge was delayed from July 1 until August 31, the very end of the season. During the summer of 1958, Canyon Village was finally operational (if not entirely completed), but still had problems filling its capacity of motel rooms and making a profit. Demolition on the old Canyon Hotel began in 1959, in part to encourage the public to stay at the new Canyon Lodge instead. But the cost of the motel complex, as well operational difficulties with running it, pushed the Yellowstone Park Company to the verge of bankruptcy. In 1959 the board was reorganized again, and now included a representative of the Los Angeles

³⁰⁶ See Lon Johnson, "Determination of Eligibility, Canyon Village (Horseshoe Plaza) Historic District," unpublished report, 2000 (Yellowstone National Park Archives).

³⁰⁷ "Address by Conrad L. Wirth...Canyon Village," prepared remarks, June 25, 1956 (Box 6, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); "\$31 Million 10-Year Yellowstone Project Set," *The Denver Post*, Monday, June 25, 1956; "U.S. Reveals Program for Yellowstone," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 27, 1956.

bankers worried about a default on their loan.³⁰⁸ Continued financial and management woes at the Yellowstone Park Company made full participation in subsequent Mission 66 plans impossible.

In the fall of 1956 Lon Garrison replaced Edmund Rogers as superintendent of Yellowstone, indicating the importance Wirth placed on making progress there. Despite the Yellowstone Park Company's obvious difficulties, Wirth and Garrison tried to press on with the Mission 66 concession plans for the park, perhaps believing that the company could build its way out its dilemma. The next motel complex in the prospectus was Grant Village, which Frank Matson had first suggested in 1946 to replace the tourist cabins, store, campground, and other facilities located directly on the edge of the West Thumb geyser basin (figs. 46-48). Early 1950s master plans show the proposed "West Thumb Lakeshore" development about two and a half miles south of the geyser basin, and resembling Canyon Village in general layout. After becoming part of the Mission 66 prospectus, clearing and grading of the site began in 1956. But further preparations were delayed as efforts were concentrated on Canyon Village. The prospectus suggested that the now renamed Grant Village would eventually be even larger than Canyon Village, with 900 motel units and lodge services, such as cafeteria, coffee shop, and a gas station. In addition, the Park Service would build another extensive campground, a trailer court, employee housing, and a lakeshore marina for the growing numbers of boaters demanding access to Yellowstone Lake. But the Yellowstone Park Company, struggling to pay off the debt incurred at Canyon Village, could not (or would not) secure the millions of dollars of financing that would be required to develop Grant Village. Further site preparations and development paid for by the Park Service did get underway in 1961, and the campground and other public facilities were officially opened in the summer of 1963. Other buildings, including employee housing, a gas station, and a marina services building were soon added. The motel complex at Grant Village, however, would continue to be mired in controversy throughout Mission 66, and in fact for decades following. While the Park Service put millions of Mission 66 dollars "into the ground" at Grant Village, preparing the site with roads, utilities, a marina, campground, and visitor centre, the concessioner resisted making any investment. In 1966 the Nichols family finally managed to sell their remaining interest in their franchise, but the corporation that

³⁰⁸ Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 132-150.

bought them out also avoided making any major capital investment at Grant Village (or elsewhere in the park).³⁰⁹

In the meantime, most of the Mission 66 program for Yellowstone that did not involve concessioners went ahead as planned. But the situations both at Canyon Village and Grant Village indicated a broader problem with concessioner construction under Mission 66. The entire business of park concessioning had changed, and the collaborative relationship that had existed between the Park Service and private entrepreneurs had broken down. The Yellowstone Park Company was effectively bankrupted by the enormous strain of making such a large investment at Canyon Village, and the company simply could not cope with the new scale and type of business operations it had undertaken. Mission 66 only exacerbated an already deteriorating situation; the inherent problems with the park concession system went back at least to the 1940s. But Wirth and his planners erred by continuing a concession system that was in need of reform. Once again, Mission 66 proceeded within the political limitations of its day, without comprehensive new federal legislation that would have addressed fundamental problems. Reform only came later, in this case with the Concession Policy Act of 1965, and then finally with the federal purchase of the Yellowstone concessioner's possessory interest in 1979.³¹⁰

But there was another, more profound problem with Mission 66 concessioner planning, and this involved how and when overnight accommodations were made part of park prospectuses. The final 1956 Mission 66 report confirmed a fundamental precept of

³⁰⁹ The controversies around Yellowstone concessions continued long after Mission 66 ended. It was not until 1979 that Congress finally did what it probably should have done thirty years earlier and purchased the possessory interest of the Yellowstone Park Company. The Park Service then prepared to use public funds to finally build a Grant Village motel complex, to be operated by a new concessioner on a contract basis. By that time, however, merchants and motel owners in the rapidly growing town of West Yellowstone denounced what they perceived as government sponsored competition. In 1981 Secretary of the Interior James Watt responded and stopped construction. Building resumed shortly thereafter, but Grant Village remained far smaller than originally planned. By the time the first 200 motel units opened in 1984, it was difficult to see the entire episode as anything but a long and destructive fiasco. For accounts of later concessioner woes at Yellowstone, see Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 365-379; Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 141-144; Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 375-379; Robin Smith, "The History of Grant Village," unpublished report, 1988 (Vertical Files, Yellowstone National Park Archives).

³¹⁰ The Concessioner Policy Act of 1965 gave legislative sanction to the preferential rights of renewal and possessory interest, and therefore gave banks a more secure basis for making large loans to concessioners. The purchase of the Yellowstone Park Company's possessory interest in 1979 allowed the government to own, improve, and expand facilities directly, rather than attempt to coerce a private partner to invest. Since the 1970s, numerous concession companies throughout the park system have been consolidated by corporations specializing in "guest services," operating franchises on a contractual basis. Concession facilities themselves, however, remain a patchwork of full federal ownership and concessioner ownership (possessory interest).

prospectus planning: where possible, gateway towns, not park concessioners, should provide overnight accommodations. But the final report also stated that out of thirty large parks that together had an overnight capacity of 25,750, only four would have their lodgings phased out, since apparently only they were “favourably located to permit private enterprise to provide accommodations outside.” In the other twenty-six, not only would overnight concessions remain, they also would be expanded in anticipation of the 80 million visitors expected in 1966. An overly simple formula was then used to determine future market demand. The existing ratio of overnight to day use visitors in the twenty-six large parks with overnight concessions was about 1:3.8. But since “a greater proportion of all visitors would use lodgings if more were available,” the ration of 1:3 was considered “more satisfactory.” In the twenty-six parks, Mission 66 called for an increase in total overnight capacity from 23,797 to 58,797; in Yellowstone the figure rose from 8,417 to 13,891.³¹¹

This very limited analysis was used as the basis for investing both private and public funds in new “motel-type” park lodges. At Yellowstone and Yosemite, these lodges were among the earliest Mission 66 projects, and they made considerable public impressions. But the construction of massive motel complexes contradicted an original, central goal of Mission 66: to reduce the impacts of larger numbers of visitors by redeveloping parks more as day use destinations. Mission 66 planners had observed the growth of motels and other services in gateway towns, and they understood how improved highways would increase visitor mobility. Nevertheless Mission 66 concession planning did not make a bold break from prewar policy. Instead it proposed greatly expanding the established concession system.

In the end, this expansion did not take place. Later market studies indicated that, at least at Yellowstone, in some cases such ambitions were not even supported by sound business plans. While visits to the park had doubled between 1940 and 1959, the Yellowstone Park Company found that the percentage of visitors staying in hotels and cabins dropped by half, from 84% to 42%, during the same period.³¹² The economics of park concessions—and of automotive tourism generally—had permanently changed. Park visitors had more options and mobility than ever before. While Wirth and Garrison

³¹¹ “Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use,” January 1956, unpublished report, (National Park Service, Denver Service Center Library).

³¹² Robin Smith, “The History of Grant Village,” unpublished report, 1988 (Vertical Files, Yellowstone National Park Archives).

pressured the Yellowstone Park Company to build more motel units, the concessioner could not even profitably fill the reduced number of Canyon Village rooms already built. As was the case in other parks, remote location and high elevation combined to create high construction costs and short seasons. Competitors in gateway towns, such as West Yellowstone, could offer lower prices and more luxurious conveniences. They also had lower construction costs, longer seasons, and full title to their property for mortgage purposes. Older park hotels of course had the advantage of being in the park and—since they encroached directly on its wonders—they could offer the attraction of Yellowstone itself. But the less intrusive Canyon Lodge could not; it was sited away from “sensitive” scenery. The Yellowstone motel complexes were planned merely as “a means to an end,” intended to be convenient, but otherwise unexceptional. As historian Mark Barringer observes, under Mission 66 the Yellowstone Park Company “stopped selling the park, their most valuable asset, and began selling motel rooms and cafeteria meals. And they lost the ability to make themselves part of the Yellowstone experience.”³¹³

National park hotels had never been a “means to an end.” They embodied vacation fantasy and the appeal of mythic historical themes, and they were indeed part of the “Yellowstone experience.” Welton Becket’s Canyon Lodge, a masterful adaptation of modernist architectural design, served its functions efficiently. But it could not hope to “harmonize,” specifically in this sense, because it was stripped of associative ornamentation and was purposefully located to avoid becoming a compositional element of park scenery. By protecting the scenery, in other words, Wirth and Vint had assured that the new concession areas would never be accepted as part of it, at least not the way an earlier generation of hotels had. Mission 66 park development, which was planned in more remote areas to minimize its impact on park landscapes, ironically was criticized by “purists” for not being more part of those landscapes: for not “harmonizing.” Devereux Butcher, in particular, blamed the modernist idiom of the architecture. But the increasingly alienated relationship of architecture to the surrounding landscape—arguably a central characteristic of modernist landscape design and planning—had far more influence on the perception of Canyon Village than the style or details of the structures themselves.

In any case, the Mission 66 goal of increasing the “pillow count” in Yellowstone to 14,000 never came close to being realized. The park’s overnight capacity remained

³¹³ Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 179.

close to what it had been: 8,700 in 1964, for example, and about 9,000 in 1972.³¹⁴ Other concession developments in other parks also provided the “motel-type” lodges the Park Service felt people wanted. In 1963, however, systemwide overnight concessioner capacity still stood at about 27,000. As at Yellowstone, Mission 66 concessioner developments did little more than replace older hotel rooms, in most cases.³¹⁵ Mission 66 did not substantially increase the total capacity of overnight facilities in the parks, despite considerable efforts to do so. But why did Wirth and his planners try to expand concessioner accommodations to the extent they did? Barringer, the most trenchant recent critic of Mission 66, insists that a blind adherence to agency “tradition” prevented them from embracing alternative approaches, such as limiting and eventually reducing lodging in Yellowstone.³¹⁶ But “traditional” Park Service planners, above all Vint, had argued for years that the agency should at all costs avoid the problems of “Plan A,” typified by situations such as the Canyon Hotel and the Yosemite Lodge. Mission 66 planning had begun by making observations and gathering data that would have supported the policies Vint and others put forward. The only tradition Wirth, Vint, and their colleagues truly venerated was the conviction that parks were to be preserved for public enjoyment. At least in 1955, neither Wirth nor Vint believed that public enjoyment necessitated overnight lodgings, which increasingly were available outside parks. The landscape architects at the Park Service were in fact very willing to pursue alternative strategies, as long as they allowed continued “enjoyment without impairment,” and this spirit imbued the initial Mission 66 effort.

The realities of congressional and local politics in the 1950s, however, also influenced Mission 66 concession policy in its final form. This was the situation at Everglades National Park in 1955, for example, when both the new concessioner and much of the public objected to Mission 66 plans that included a restaurant and marina, but not a park lodge. Wirth held his ground, even when the concessioner halved the amount he was willing to invest. He reversed his decision, however, when he was attacked not only by local elected officials, business leaders, and newspaper editors, but also by both Florida senators and the local congressman, all of whom who demanded that the

³¹⁴ Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 383. Today there are around 2,238 rooms and cabins in Yellowstone (this figure is not a “pillow count”). Camping has been expanded above the original suggested Mission 66 level to about 2,200 sites.

³¹⁵ “Mission 66 Progress Report,” October 1963 (National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Centre), 13.

³¹⁶ See Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 130-131.

Everglades plan provide for a national park experience “comparable” to that of other national parks. Wirth could not resist that kind of pressure, at least not if he hoped to be successful with appropriations committees. And Wirth was, above all, skilled in congressional politics. He shaped Mission 66—including its concessioner policies—to reverse fifteen years of congressional indifference. In this sense his policies succeeded. But it was not Park Service “tradition,” as much as the demands of the public, the influence and rights of concessioners, and the power of federal and local elected officials that perpetuated the national park concession system in the postwar period.

10.3 Everglades

If the staff of Yellowstone and the Mission 66 planners agreed on a basic philosophy for the pilot prospectus for that park, the prospectus for Everglades National Park generated more dissent. Many Park Service officials believed Everglades to be the first true “wilderness park.” In the 1934 legislation authorizing the park, Congress specifically mandated that the park be “permanently preserved as a wilderness” and prohibited any development that would “interfere with the preservation intact of the unique flora and fauna and the essentially primitive conditions now prevailing.”³¹⁷ The National Audubon Society and other conservation groups had already struggled for decades to preserve the Everglades as a unique and invaluable habitat, and they remained intensely involved in the fate of the park project. Land acquisitions were finally completed by the state of Florida in 1947. The park’s first superintendent, Daniel B. Beard, ran the park on a shoestring for the next seven years, relying on the existing Ingraham Highway to provide access to the main visitor areas at Royal Palms, Coot Bay, and Flamingo. Several small concessions offered snack bar and tour boat services, but the highway often became impassable, and even public restrooms were lacking.

Conservationists, as well as local chambers of commerce and other Florida state officials and members of Congress, eagerly awaited plans and funding for the development of the new national park. In the spring of 1953 Superintendent Beard travelled to Washington to consult with Vint, Wirth, and other staff on plans for Flamingo. But no major appropriations were made, and Beard was kept busy with

³¹⁷ Mission 66 documents and even press releases quoted the legislation, which Wirth characterized as a “positive injunction.” See for example “Improving Visitor Uses of Everglades National Park,” May 10, 1956, (Entry A1, Box 5, RG 79, National Archives).

property transfers, boundary expansions, and dealing with oil company efforts to expand into the park. Park headquarters were housed in rented space in nearby Homestead.³¹⁸

As was the case at Yellowstone, events at Everglades had reached a critical point just as Mission 66 was organizing. In October 1954 Secretary of the Interior McKay invited proposals from concessioners interested in building and operating a marina, motel, gas station, employee housing, stores, and other services at Flamingo. The contract required a private investment of at least \$500,000, and the Park Service had already begun its contribution by making road improvements and dredging the future boat slips at the "chosen development site."³¹⁹ But while a concessioner was selected, the program for Flamingo continued to develop as the contract was negotiated. Following initial discussions with his Mission 66 committees that February, Wirth ordered a "special use study" which was conducted in the park. By March Wirth had decided not to include overnight accommodations in the Flamingo development. He somewhat proudly exhorted his Mission 66 planners to make similarly difficult moves away from precedent at other parks.³²⁰ Conservation groups, including the Audubon Society and the American Nature Association, had contacted Wirth and made clear their opposition to a "resort" at Flamingo, implying that the 1954 program involved too much development. The initial organization of Mission 66 that February also had convinced Wirth to heed Thomas Vint's advice and avoid "Plan A" at the Everglades. Given a clean slate, Wirth later explained, his agency intended to avoid a situation in which a small development in a sensitive area would grow to an unacceptable size as demand increased. He also pointed out that there was no shortage of motels nearby in Florida City and Homestead. Overnight accommodations would also "constitute unnecessary intrusion into the natural scene" at Flamingo, and take up too much of the very limited high ground in the park. Just as important, the elimination of the motel would "obviate the danger of the Flamingo development becoming just another Florida resort area....Everglades National Park

³¹⁸ "Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Report," May 1953, (Everglades National Park Collections Management Centre).

³¹⁹ "Proposals Sought for Construction and Operation of Visitor Facilities in Everglades National Park," press release, October 14, 1954, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); "Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Report," April 1954; June 1955 (Everglades National Park Collections Management Centre).

³²⁰ Appleman, "A History of the Mission 66 Program," 20.

should not emulate or compete with those uses, but should stand as a distinctive feature itself.”³²¹

That July Superintendent Beard returned to Washington to work on the Everglades prospectus with Mission 66 planners. The pilot prospectus they drafted contained no mention of any overnight accommodations and emphasized that the park was primarily a “biological area” and a “wilderness preserve.” Interpretation, not recreation, was “requisite to the enjoyment and appreciation of the Everglades scene,” and therefore the extent of development should be determined by the needs of the interpretive mission, not by recreation. In practice at Flamingo, this meant a “Public Use building” for visitor information, a restaurant, gas station, and even a marina (already under construction), but no motel. The plan characterized Everglades as a new kind of park, set aside for biological not scenic values, precariously set on the “very threshold of a major metropolitan area” that was sprawling rapidly. The prospectus emphasized the scientific mission of the park, and even suggested that the wildfire control policy should be based on “sound ecological facts” that might sometimes require that fire “be considered as part of the natural course of events, like hurricane.” Superintendent Beard, a Park Service field biologist since the 1930s and an Everglades researcher in his own right, helped give the prospectus its unprecedented ecological emphasis.³²²

But when the new concessioner, Robert Knight of the Everglades Park Company, realized overnight accommodations would not be part of the Flamingo development, he immediately scaled back his interest. He felt that as a day use area, Flamingo could not generate profits warranting the investment originally described. The terms of the contract were still under negotiation, and Knight made it clear that unless he was allowed to build a motel he would not bear the cost of the large “Public Use” building the Park Service also wanted. Local officials and important park supporters also wondered why overnight accommodations, which were part of the 1954 proposal, had been removed in the Mission 66 prospectus. At an October 1955 meeting in John D. Pennekamp’s office at the *Miami Herald*, Wirth defended his decision to Florida’s governor, congressional delegation, and

³²¹ Eivend T. Scoyen to Wesley A. D’Ewart, “Concession Facilities, Everglades National Park,” memorandum, April 3, 1956; Conrad L. Wirth, “Improving Visitor Uses of Everglades National Park,” May 10, 1956 (Entry A1, Box 5, RG 79, National Archives).

³²² “Prospectus, Mission 66, Objectives for Everglades National Park for 1966 and Beyond,” draft, July 15, 1955, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). The prospectus also originally stated that park headquarters would be outside the park in Homestead or Florida City, a decision that was later reversed after the superintendent and regional director argued in favour of the Parachute Key location near the park entrance.

other local officials.³²³ The Park Service director insisted that overnight accommodations would not be part of the “initial development plan” at Everglades, although he did allow that they “could be provided later if deemed essential by the Service.” Knight agreed to the contract terms that fall, which now required he invest only \$250,000 in the overall development.³²⁴

That spring, however, the protest against Wirth’s decision at Everglades became more organized and imposing. The Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce addressed Assistant Secretary of the Interior Wesley D’Ewart directly, complaining that the draft prospectus was “a violation of the understanding of the people of this county...when they urged their state government to contribute...one million acres to the creation of the Everglades park....The understanding was...that everything necessary would be done to make the Park a tourist attraction.” The *Miami Herald* editorialized that Everglades deserved to be developed in a manner comparable to other parks in the system, which meant including the overnight accommodations that had been included in the “original plans,” but then “cancelled abruptly, without reason.”³²⁵ Wirth still supported his superintendent and planners, issuing a strong statement and a press release arguing that a motel was unnecessary and inappropriate and reminding his critics that his agency was spending \$5 million on other development in the park, building a new road to Flamingo, picnic areas, interpretive centres, and the other features of a day use park. But the “preservation of the scenic and scientific values of the Everglades while making them accessible to more and more visitors,” he also admitted, “presents one of the most challenging problems in our MISSION 66 program.” Within a year Wirth acceded to political pressure and agreed to a motel at Flamingo with sixty units and a swimming pool (figs. 15, 16, 49).³²⁶

³²³ “Superintendent’s Monthly Narrative Report,” October 1955; January 1956, (Everglades National Park Collections Management Centre).

³²⁴ In the end, the Park Service paid more than half the cost of the \$350,000 Public Use building. Daniel B. Beard to Edward Zimmerman, “Mission 66 in Relation to Concession Planning,” memorandum, July 21, 1955 (Entry A1, Box 5, RG 79, National Archives); “Proposed Contract for Operation of Visitor Facilities in Everglades...Submitted to Congress for Review,” press release, September 21, 1955, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³²⁵ Alfred Canel to Wesley A. D’Ewart, April 26, 1956 (Entry A1, Box 5, RG 79, National Archives); “Why Discriminate Against Everglades?,” editorial, *The Miami Herald*, Tuesday, May 22, 1956.

³²⁶ Conrad L. Wirth, “Improving Visitor Uses of Everglades National Park,” May 10, 1956; “Mission 66 Improvement Program is Announced for Everglades,” press release, May 20, 1956 (Entry A1, Box 5, RG 79, National Archives); Herbert Maier to Lemuel Garrison, “Report to the Regional Director on the Everglades Meeting,” memorandum, April 15, 1957 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

Chapter 11: Mission 66 Architecture

11.1 The “Visitor Center”

How did Mission 66 affect the way the visiting public perceived and appreciated the nature and history it sought to enjoy? What are the continuing influences of Mission 66—the program’s philosophy as well as its built legacy—today? Perhaps no single feature of Mission 66 planning and design has had greater influence than the park visitor centre, which has become a ubiquitous feature of public and protected landscapes all over the world. As the most conspicuous feature of modernist architectural design in many parks, the visitor centre had enormous symbolic and aesthetic impact. Mission 66 was not merely a development program, nor did it produce only buildings. Architectural design, however, informed and embodied many of the program’s most important initiatives, and the essential character of Mission 66 is perhaps most readily accessible through an analysis of the program’s architecture.

Modernist park architecture, like the new planning goals of the Mission 66 prospectus, was vital to the implementation and success of Mission 66. But it was not the International Style, or any other style, that primarily interested Wirth, Vint, and their planners; it was the increased functionality and efficiency that could be achieved through modernist design, materials, and building technologies. They did not adopt modernism as a style as much as they invented a distinctly modernist building type—the visitor centre—and then used it extensively to implement their revised park planning ideas. A number of architects, landscape architects, historians, and interpreters contributed to the development of the visitor centre. Like many modernist projects, the new buildings resulted from interdisciplinary cooperation and an increased emphasis on objective, efficient solutions to planning problems. The organization of the WODC and the EODC in 1954 brought Park Service designers, engineers, and historians together in their own offices in San Francisco and Philadelphia, independent of the regional administrative offices. In Washington, Thomas Vint remained overall chief of design and construction, assisted by chief landscape architect Bill Carnes and chief architect Dick Sutton. In San Francisco, Sanford Hill headed the WODC, with Robert G. Hall as supervising landscape architect and Lyle Bennet as supervising architect. The EODC was headed by Edward Zimmer, with Harvey H. Cornell and John B. (“Bill”) Cabot in the same respective roles.

By 1960, Mission 66 had swelled the professional ranks in these two design offices to several hundred in-house landscape architects, architects, and administrative employees. Almost without exception, these managers were long time Park Service employees who, regardless of where they received academic training, received their most formative professional experience working in state and national parks during the New Deal.³²⁷

It was in the offices of the WODC and the EODC between 1954 and 1957 that the idea of the visitor centre was elaborated as the successor to park museum and administration buildings. Versions of visitor centres in the early 1950s were first described as “administrative-museum,” “public service,” or “public use” buildings, reflecting the struggle to resolve complex, combined building programs. In February 1956, as initial plans for Mission 66 reached completion, Wirth issued a memorandum insisting that the term “visitor center” be used consistently. Wirth’s terminology helps clarify the relationship of this new building type to contemporary trends in planning and architecture, particularly shopping centre design. Visitor centres were predicated on the same assumptions as contemporary shopping centres: large numbers of customers would be arriving by private car, and both they and their vehicles needed to be efficiently handled as they shifted from the automotive realm to a strictly pedestrian environment, where they could conveniently find all services clustered together. In early designs for “public use buildings” at Carlsbad Caverns (1953) and Grand Canyon (1954), WODC architects (especially Cecil Doty) attempted to combine many of the functions of an entire park village into a single large building, described in one case as “a one-stop service unit.” Park Service offices and interpretive display areas, bathrooms, as well as information desks, auditoriums, and generous lobbies were all combined in efficient, indoor sequences of spaces that were linked together in plan by a diagrammatic conception of “visitor flow.”³²⁸ Most of these spaces related to functions previously handled in separate park buildings, such as museums, comfort stations, and administration buildings; but new audio-visual media and larger numbers of visitors also required larger (even multiple) auditoriums and spacious lobbies that could receive and organize floods of arriving visitors. The new buildings were planned in conjunction with extensive parking lots and new or realigned park roads. Congestion was to be avoided above all.

³²⁷ Hammons, “A Brief Organizational History of the Office of Design and Construction,” 3; “Interview with A. Clark Stratton,” March 1, 1962, conducted by S. Herbert Evison, transcript, p. 2, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³²⁸ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 17-21.

“Circulation must be a continuous process of motion,” for both vehicles and pedestrians, as Welton Becket advised for shopping centre design (at the time he was also designing the Canyon Village Lodge complex at Yellowstone).³²⁹ The world of “one-stop shopping” took shape as the Park Service developed the visitor centre, and for many of the same reasons. In fact, at a design conference in 1958, architect Lyle Bennett complained about the term “visitor center” because the public confused the new and “unusual, specialized facility” with shopping centres, a far more familiar phenomenon for most park visitors at that time.³³⁰

The visitor centre was more than an adaptation of the park museum idea. It was, as Victor Gruen characterized the shopping centre, a new building type. The concept and planning process for visitor centres grew out of essentially modernist principles. As the “hub” and “focal point” of a park, the visitor centre provided a control point, and a centre for arrival, orientation, and park interpretation intended to provide virtually all park visitors with a desired level of service. The new centres offered a full range of facilities, and were strategically sited to intercept the flow of automobiles into and through a park. Visitors were more numerous and mobile than ever, often staying in motels outside park boundaries and visiting parks on automotive day trips. The visitor centre was intended to assure that even under these circumstances, basic orientation, services, and core interpretive messages would be delivered. Otherwise the crowds of visitors might simply drive through the park without ever appreciating the significance of the scenery, history, or other park resources, while perhaps resenting potential negative aspects of their experience, including traffic congestion and overcrowded facilities. “Visitor flow” was the overwhelming reality of architectural design as well as park planning. And just as Gruen had civic aspirations for his “shopping towns,” Vint insisted that the visitor centre would be the new “city hall” of a park: a central and public space that served as a common feature of every visit, and as a fixture of the daily pattern of life of the people who lived and worked there.³³¹

New visitor centres were high on the list of the majority of the prospectuses drafted by park superintendents and Mission 66 planners. The 1956 final Mission 66

³²⁹ Welton Becket, “Shopping Centre Traffic Problems,” *Traffic Quarterly* 9 (April 1955): 162-172.

³³⁰ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 18.

³³¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Visitor Center Planning: Notes on Discussions Held in EODC November 18-22, 1957, and WODC February 4-6, 1958, unpublished report, n.d. [1958], (National Park Service Denver Service Center Library); Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 222; Barry (cont.)

report insisted that “one of the most pressing needs for each [park] area is the visitor center.” Wirth was particularly convinced that the idea would serve the park system well.³³² Before Mission 66, superintendents submitted proposals for new buildings or other facilities through a Proposed Construction Project (PCP), which detailed the need and program for a new building. The PCP was passed on to the regional office where it was developed into a schematic plan with cost estimates. The regional director then prioritized the proposal for funding. The project might go into design development at that point, and eventually be finalized in construction drawings and sent out to bid once funding had been secured. The entire process was usually in-house, especially at the preliminary stages of design, although consulting architects and engineers might be used to produce final design drawings. After 1954, PCPs were sent directly to the WODC and EODC, although regional directors still prioritized construction budgets for their regions. The initiation of Mission 66 further changed the process by asking superintendents to assemble their wish lists of PCPs as Mission 66 prospectuses. The regional office remained involved, but only through their participation drafting and reviewing the prospectuses. In Washington, Wirth, Vint, and the Mission 66 planners already directly supervised the WODC and EODC, and now assumed much of the responsibility for prioritizing construction budgets, as well. This assured a certain level of consistency in the priorities established for park construction. A new visitor centre, for example, became a high priority for a majority of parks.³³³

With the 1956 appropriations secured, WODC and EODC staff anticipated at least ten funded visitor centre PCPs per year for the next decade. In addition to preliminary designs, the first set of projects would require immediate design development and construction drawings in order to assemble contracts and bid projects out to construction contractors that spring. Mission 66 called for increased levels of staffing for the Park Service, generally, including the design offices. But the agency did not expect to handle

Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), 49-51.

³³² At the opening of one of the first visitor centres in 1957, at Yorktown (Colonial National Historical Park), Wirth's prepared remarks included the phrase, “Throughout the Nation, 170 (?) National Park Visitor centers are either under construction, in the final stages of planning, or firmly fixed in our comprehensive program.” There were 195 units in the park system at the time. Wirth scratched out the questionable number, however, and wrote in “more than 100” by hand. A collection of Wirth's speeches, including many prepared remarks for visitor centre dedications, are conserved at the American Heritage Centre, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, Box 7.

³³³ “Interview with Cecil J. Doty,” conducted by Jacilee Wray, February 26, 1990, transcript, p. 3-4, (catalogue number GRCA 52220, Grand Canyon National Park Archive); Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 26.

all the new design work with in-house forces, as it had for the influx of work during the New Deal. The need for architectural and engineering services was seen as a temporary demand, and there was no need to relieve high unemployment as there had been in the 1930s. The situation was closer to that of the 1920s, when the Park Service had employed architectural consultants, including Myron Hunt, Gilbert Stanley Underwood, and Herbert Maier, to design many larger rustic park buildings of that era. Also, during the postwar period any construction project estimated to cost more than \$200,000 came under the supervision of the General Services Administration (GSA), a separate federal agency that took agency preliminary designs and contracted out for design development, construction drawings, and construction supervision. Two of the first visitor centre projects handled by the EODC, the Yorktown and Jamestown visitor centres (1957) at Colonial National Historical Park, cost more than \$300,000 apiece and so were supervised by the GSA. The Philadelphia architects Gilboy, Bellante, and Clauss developed the preliminary PCP and designed buildings with red brick veneer (a concession to the historical setting), but that otherwise suggested contemporary American institutional architecture, with large geometric volumes, open plans, large windows, and roof terraces. Park Service officials were unhappy with the results, perhaps for administrative as much as aesthetic reasons. After 1957, special approval was sought and usually received to keep even those projects costing more than \$200,000 under Park Service supervision. The great majority of new visitor centres, in any case, cost less than that amount.³³⁴

Other projects, such as comfort stations (bathrooms), or other small, utilitarian structures were given standardized plans rather than new designs. Housing had its own imposed cost limitations per unit, necessitating a level of standardization as well, although with flexibility for local conditions and materials. Visitor centres and park administration buildings, however, always required unique designs. Landscape architects and interpretive planners, both in the WODC and EODC and in individual parks, took the schematic idea for the project and worked it into the overall development context of the park's Mission 66 prospectus. The new visitor centre was sited, integrated with the park road and trail systems, and planned as part of the overall interpretive strategy for the park. Often "secondary" visitor centres, smaller roadside structures or signs, and short "nature walks" near areas of particular interest composed complementary features of the overall

³³⁴ "Interview with A. Clark Stratton," conducted by S. Herbert Evison, March 1, 1962, transcript p. 2-3, (cont.)

interpretive plan. The landscape architects usually established the footprints of a proposed visitor centres and even designed parking lots, paths, and outdoor amphitheatres that exploited the views of scenery, historic scenes, or other “park resources” in the surrounding landscape. At that point, the architects and engineers (who sometimes never saw the visitor centre site) would finish the set of “preliminaries” by developing schematic designs for the building itself including rough cost estimates.

Cecil Doty did much of the preliminary visitor centre design early in the Mission 66 program, and contributed greatly to the development of this building type. Vint had already promoted Doty to the unusual post of “regional designer” in 1952, freeing him from the administrative duties of a regional architect and allowing him to concentrate solely on design. As the principal architectural designer of the WODC, Doty provided many preliminary design schemes, and in some cases developed those designs much further.³³⁵ Allaback documents a total of 110 national park visitor centre projects and sixteen “additions” to existing buildings with construction contracts let between 1956 and 1966. She also lists 54 preliminary visitor centre design projects done by Doty while at the WODC during those years. Not all of Doty’s preliminary design projects were built, and many others were significantly altered by other architects as they moved to final design and construction drawings. But Doty’s contribution to Mission 66 visitor design in the mid-1950s, particularly at the initial, conceptual stage of design, was extremely significant. Wirth and Vint relied on Doty, not unlike they had in the 1930s on Doty’s mentor, Herbert Maier, to provide architectural expressions of park planning goals that influenced not only buildings in the western parks, but by example visitor centres throughout the national park system. But as the principal WODC designer, Doty also remained involved in project work, and never rose from that level into the managerial ranks, as Wirth, Vint, Maier, and many other Park Service landscape architects and architects had.³³⁶

(National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³³⁵ “Interview with Cecil J. Doty,” conducted by S. Herbert Evison, October 26, 1962, transcript, p. 4, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); “Interview with Cecil J. Doty,” conducted by Jacilee Wray, February 26, 1990, transcript, p. 4, (catalogue number GRCA 52220, Grand Canyon National Park Archive); U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Visitor Center Planning, 45.

³³⁶ Conrad Wirth gives a total of 114 new visitor centres during Mission 66. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 270. The exact definition of what constitutes a new visitor centre (as opposed to an addition or a remodelling) makes it difficult to specify an exact number. Allaback’s totals reflect what she could confirm through project records at the Technical Information Centre, National Park Service, Denver Service Center. See Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 255-265.

There was no single designer in the EODC that played the same role as Doty in the WODC, although supervising architect John Cabot did exercise great influence on visitor centre design both in his region and throughout the park system. Cabot later replaced Dick Sutton as the agency's chief architect in Washington, and in both capacities he established standards and procedures for the planning and design of visitor centres throughout the Mission 66 period. Like Doty, Cabot stressed the use of "spatial relationship diagrams," and "traffic flow diagrams" as starting points for preliminary design. For Cabot, the "freedom of expression in architecture during this postwar period" (modernism) could not be ignored. He intended to make sure that the Park Service hired the best possible consultants, since "the cheapest investment is to hire the very finest design talent available."³³⁷ After the first season of Mission 66 construction, Cabot travelled the country, reporting that new park buildings appeared "very refreshing designwise when viewed in comparison with the other [rustic] units in their immediate environment," but that the details of construction had not always been "given sufficient thought."³³⁸ Construction contracts had been rushed, in some cases, with inadequately developed construction drawings, leading to shoddy or badly conceived workmanship. By 1957 Cabot sought a larger role for consulting architects, who increasingly would take preliminary Park Service designs and develop them into fully articulated, thoughtfully detailed construction contracts. The in-house design offices simply could not produce all the necessary construction documents. The consultants that Cabot helped select were progressive, modernist designers, including some who were, or went on to become, leading figures in American architecture, such as Richard Neutra and Romaldo Giurgola. The role of the consultant varied according to the project. In some cases they did little more than produce construction drawings for developed designs; in others, particularly the larger, higher profile cases, they were asked to develop the entire design. Even in these cases, however, the consulting architects were given the site, program, and even the orientation and footprint for the new building, as determined by the Park Service landscape architects and interpretive planners.³³⁹

By the fall of 1957, the end of the second construction season of Mission 66, only three visitor centres were completed: the two at Colonial National Historical Park and one

³³⁷ John B. Cabot, "Creative Park Architecture," *Park Practice Guideline*. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (July 1963): 53-55.

³³⁸ John B. Cabot, "Notes Gathered Travelling," October 12, 1956, memorandum (Box 29, RG 79, National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region).

³³⁹ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 24-33.

at the south rim of the Grand Canyon, all of which had been initiated before Mission 66. But others were already in construction, at Everglades, Carlsbad Caverns, Olympic, Yellowstone, and Dinosaur, and approximately ten additional projects per year were anticipated. The staffs of the WODC and EODC decided to conduct a thorough review of their work to that point and compare their experiences. Five days of meetings were held in Philadelphia that November, followed by three more days that February in San Francisco. The next month Washington chief of interpretation Ronald F. Lee and chief architect Dick Sutton issued a joint memorandum on visitor centre planning and design, with attached notes on the discussions held as well as individual papers prepared by chief naturalist John E. Doerr, and architects Bennet, Cabot, and Doty. The interpreters and architects emphasized the need for close cooperation “right from the early stages of planning” in order to adequately serve the rapidly developing requirements for museum exhibits, interpretive displays, auditoriums, and office and storage space in the new buildings. Ronald Lee, who had been the chief instigator of the meetings, wanted more organization in the preparation of the “museum prospectuses” that determined the basic building program prior to the preliminary design stage. “Supplemental museum prospectuses” were called for by both WODC and EODC to better elaborate the considerable and obviously growing needs of curators and park interpreters.³⁴⁰

Some of the early problems identified included the desire of museum curators for spaces with few or no windows to protect objects from daylight, while architects and exhibition designers preferred sunny spaces with views of surrounding landscapes. The designers were also worried by the observation that at Grand Canyon, Colonial, and soon elsewhere, lobbies, bathrooms, information counters, and exhibit spaces all potentially became clogged with people waiting in lines, or simply “back-tracking” rather than following a “circle” route through the facility. Inadequate space for the sale of publications, poorly located pay phones or water fountains, or an inefficient floor plan all could impede “flow” and drastically undermine the efficiency of the building. For the Park Service architects, the answer was “openness” in plan, including spacious entrance lobbies with high ceilings and large windows. Such spaces often typified modernist architecture, which employed steel and reinforced concrete construction that could span large uninterrupted areas with few vertical supports or load bearing walls. Such

³⁴⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Visitor Center Planning*, 1-5; Ralph H. Lewis, *Museum Curatorship in the National Park Service, 1904-1982* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993), 150.

construction enabled visual connections through large windows or window walls to outdoor spaces (often terraces) and surrounding views, which was another typical characteristic of modernist design that naturally fit the programmatic and functional needs of the visitor centre. Cabot recommended “openness of space and openness of plan,” and suggested that outdoor spaces (which were less expensive to build) could be integrated with indoor spaces to accommodate even greater anticipated “visitor load.” Views were to be “exploited,” whether from the lobby, from roof terraces, or from outdoor terraces and amphitheatres directly incorporated into the circulation plan. Above all, Bennett, Cabot, and Doty all agreed that “circulation [was] ...the ‘backbone’ of any plan and should guide the visitor and help him make decisions.” Cabot and Doty both provided numerous examples of conceptual “visitor sequence” and “visitor flow” diagrams, that generated the design of ground level floor plans, and that integrated indoor and outdoor spaces.³⁴¹

The visitor centre adapted modernist ideas of architectural composition to the programmatic and functional purposes of national parks. The integration of indoor and outdoor space in a (usually) one-level, public building evoked the pavilions of Mies van der Rohe; the flow diagrams developed by Cabot and Doty recalled Le Corbusier’s use of architectural procession (a dramatic sequence of spaces and views) to organize the experience created by a building. As developed by the Park Service in the mid-1950s, the visitor centre became a viewing platform, in which views from interior spaces, roof terraces, and adjacent outdoor terraces or amphitheatres were calculated as a flowing, sequential experience. They were buildings to see from, not to be seen. In this sense they reversed the premise of prewar park museum design. Those rustic buildings were meant to be seen: they were sited to form elements of pictorial landscape compositions experienced by visitors moving through and around a park village. Great effort and expense went into the design of elaborate façades that evoked Swiss chalets, “pioneer” construction, or “Indian” culture. But the outward stylistic or aesthetic appearance of the Mission 66 visitor centre—as long as it was minimal and did not visually contrast with its surroundings or call too much attention to itself—was almost inconsequential. The removal of most ornamentation and historical allusion was another aspect of modernism that fit the purpose of the new buildings perfectly. They were not meant to have a powerful presence themselves, but to recede visually, even as they facilitated the

³⁴¹ See U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Visitor Center Planning*, 1-20, 45-48; Lewis, (cont.)

appreciation of park landscapes and resources by larger numbers of people. The architecture, ideally, should be nearly transparent: a composition of functional, overlapping spaces and outward views, not of structural mass and decorative façades.

The best Mission 66 visitor centres achieved this appropriate adaptation of contemporary modernist ideas to the goals espoused by Park Service landscape architects and interpreters for the redevelopment of national parks (fig. 50). Many successful examples were less expensive, smaller buildings. Cecil Doty's Zion (1957) and Montezuma Castle visitor centres (1958) typify an unpretentious, functional approach to architecture that met pressing needs for visitor and administrative functions with dignified efficiency and minimal visual intrusion on the landscape. At Zion, for example (figs. 51-56), from the public (front) side, the visitor centre appears to be a low, horizontal, earth tone structure. The building is sited on a slope, however, so that two stories of maintenance and administrative space could be incorporated on the back of the building, where they were unseen by most visitors. The building provided tremendous utility—office space and an attached maintenance yard—while the public experience was one of a light and spacious pavilion and terrace, with views of surrounding geological features. Sound architectural planning not only facilitated efficient “visitor flow” in the public areas of the building, it also enabled the visitor centre to serve greatly enlarged administrative, maintenance, and curatorial programs while minimizing the overall architectural presence of the building. The public experienced the visitor centre as a minimal, light filled pavilion, oriented to the surrounding landscape, without being aware of much of the real work the building was doing.³⁴²

While examples such as Zion were designed entirely in-house, with consultants producing only the working drawings, other visitor centres were true collaborations. The Flamingo Visitor Center at Everglades (1957), for example, was partly funded by the new restaurant and motel concessioner, who hired his own architect, Harry L. Keck, Jr., of Coral Gables. Doty (working in this case well outside his region) had earlier assisted Cabot and his EODC staff in preliminary designs for the building, and Vint had been closely involved, visiting the site several times and approving its location and conceptual design. Keck's office produced the final design and working drawings. Set high on columns (to avoid flooding during storm surges), and featuring a ramped entrance, concrete construction, horizontal bands of windows, and plain geometrical massing, the

Museum Curatorship, 151.

building evoked Le Corbusier and other modernists (figs. 15, 16). But again the architecture was not intended as merely a stylistic reference. The elevated structure contained far more program than it suggested, including office space at the ground level under the visitor centre. Visitors entered by a ramp directly to the elevated level, where an unusual juxtaposition of airy public spaces—a restaurant and a visitor centre connected by an open bridge—made the entire experience one of a raised viewing terrace oriented to Florida Bay. From the surrounding landscape, views of the bay were framed by the elevated bridge/terrace and the juxtaposed building masses, reinforcing the impression of an open pavilion, and somewhat belying the presence of a large restaurant and administrative complex.

The collaboration that produced this result was typical of many visitor centre projects. In other instances, particularly in the case of larger and more expensive buildings, architectural consultants were given greater responsibilities. Even in these situations, however, the private architects developed their designs after being given the “preliminaries” that established site, orientation, program, and surrounding landscape development. The Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument (1958), for example, was based on a preliminary concept developed by Doty and WODC colleagues (figs. 10, 11). A remarkable bed of dinosaur fossils, discovered in 1909, was to be exposed, left *in situ*, and covered by a shed to protect it and provide public access and services. Put in the hands of consulting architects S. Robert Anshen, William S. Allen, and Robert Hein in 1957, the building took on dramatic lines and became one of the unqualified aesthetic successes of Mission 66. Just a year earlier, the firm of Anshen and Allen had designed the Sedona Chapel in Arizona, a dramatic and widely published building that incorporated the striking rock formations on which it was sited. The project probably helped the firm secure the Dinosaur commission, which also demanded a unique union with its geological setting. At Dinosaur, the architects suggested a series of steel trusses that carried an asymmetrical vee-shaped roof over the exposed bed of fossils. While Park Service museum curators had originally suggested limiting natural light in the enclosure, the walls in Anshen and Allen’s approved design were completely glazed in a rectangular grid of windows. Public services, offices, and interpretive space were located in a massive, two-story concrete cylinder that contrasted to the light, angular shed structure attached to it. A sweeping entrance ramp led directly to the second level, and

³⁴² Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 228-246.

from there onto a viewing terrace (within the shed) that gave a stunning view down on the expanse of partially exposed fossils. An active paleontological laboratory was housed beneath the terrace, at the ground level of the shed extending behind the cylinder of the visitor centre. The building opened in the spring of 1958 to a positive reception among Park Service officials, architectural critics, and scientists, who appreciated the *in situ* interpretation of the resources as well as the active laboratory that was interpreted for the public.³⁴³

For Wirth, the successful development of Dinosaur was a priority for Mission 66. The positive critical assessment and clear architectural merit of the building rejoined the critics who objected to modernist design in national park settings. The building's minimalist aesthetic indeed "harmonized" with the forbidding landscape of northeastern Utah, and its frank expression of construction technology seemed appropriate in a facility dedicated to scientific research as well as public enjoyment. This was also the park that preservationists had rallied to protect from the Echo Park Dam; the final victory in that controversy had just been achieved in 1956. Although the new visitor centre was far from the Echo Park area, it nevertheless countered the claim that the park was unused by the public.

Mission 66 made it possible to fund substantial improvements at Dinosaur—and many other less known parks and monuments with lower numbers of visitors—really for the first time. Historian Hal Rothman points out that the Park Service did not give the same level of attention or funding to most national monuments, for example, as it did to more heavily visited and more famous landscape parks elsewhere in the system.³⁴⁴ National monuments, set aside by presidential decree not by congressional legislation, often preserved smaller areas and archaeological ruins that, at least initially, were of more interest to scientists and "pot hunters" than they were to the general public. The New Deal began to address the imbalance, providing development funds for sites such as Bandelier and White Sands national monuments in New Mexico (for which Bennett designed park administration buildings).³⁴⁵ The magnitude of Mission 66, however, and the outstanding need for visitor facilities in many smaller parks, brought an

³⁴³ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 39-60. The Quarry Visitor Center was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001 for its significance in American architecture.

³⁴⁴ See Hal Rothman, *America's National Monuments: The Politics of Preservation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, by arrangement with the University of Illinois Press, 1989).

unprecedented level of consistency to all the units of the national park system. By the end of Mission 66, even the most remote parks enjoyed basic utilities, a visitor centre, maintenance yard, and standard housing for employees. This suite of basic facilities—above all the visitor centre—became the *sine qua non* of a functional unit of the national park system. Without a visitor centre, it seemed, no park could be expected to adequately preserve and interpret its resources, and a series of the buildings were considered necessary at larger parks. New visitor centres represented not only consistent standards for the convenience of visitors and staff, but also a standard of administration in every park. The construction of visitor centres was linked to the expansion and training of staff to work in them, as well as the use of slide and movie projectors and other technological means of more efficiently interpreting a park to its public.

Wirth and his staff of planners, and the scores of park superintendents who drafted Mission 66 prospectuses, made the visitor centre the architectural and functional centrepiece of their reinvented National Park Service. More than 100 were planned, and by 1959 thirty-five were opened, with many more under construction. By 1964 seventy-two were opened, and by 1966 there were ninety-five, with sixteen more let to contractors and under construction, for a total of 111 (at least by one agency count).³⁴⁶ That year there were 254 units in the park system. In price they ranged from less than \$100,000 (for example, Montezuma Castle, Hopewell Culture, Fredericksburg), to less than \$200,000 (Arches, Canyon de Chelly, Eielson, Fort Sumter, Saratoga), to less than \$400,000 (Sequoia and Kings Canyon, Colorado National Monument, Antietam, Rock Creek Park), to more than \$400,000. In 1963 this last group included the Gettysburg Cyclorama and the Death Valley visitor centres (both around \$500,000), and the \$7.5 million Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Visitor Center in St. Louis. In 1966 the \$2 million Paradise (Henry M. Jackson Memorial) Visitor Center at Mount Rainier

³⁴⁵ The complex of park buildings at Bandelier National Monument was designated a National Historic Landmark district in 1987 for its significance in American architecture. Harrison, *Architecture in the Parks*, 355-382.

³⁴⁶ According to a 1973 Park Service account, six Mission 66 visitor centres opened in calendar year 1957, ten in 1958, nineteen in 1959, seven in 1960, five in 1961, eleven in 1962, eleven in 1963, nine in 1964, ten in 1965, and seven in 1966. Sixteen more had contracts let (gone to construction) before 1966 and opened between 1967 and 1969, for a total of 111. "Visitor Centers Completed Under Mission 66," memorandum, n.d. [1973], (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). Sarah Allaback lists 110, confirmed through the records of the National Park Service Technical Information Centre, Denver Service Center, with locations and attributions. Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 255-262. The final Mission 66 "Progress Report" in 1966 listed only 100 "new" visitor centres, probably indicating a discrepancy between new buildings and projects involving substantial additions and alterations to existing buildings. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Mission 66 Progress Report, March 1966" (National Park Service Technical Information Centre, Denver).

joined this group as another very atypical project, in this case the result of an elaborate attempt to settle twenty years of controversy over hotels and winter use at Paradise. Of the ninety-nine visitor centres completed or “programmed” through fiscal year 1963, thirty-three were less than \$100,000, forty-three less than \$200,000, twenty less than \$400,000, and only three more than \$400,000.³⁴⁷ Some visitor centres involved the conversion or expansion of older buildings, but the great majority were new construction and established the functional centre of a revised strategy for how a park received and served visitors. The ubiquity of the new building type indicated the great faith national park planners and architects placed in the philosophical and practical approaches Mission 66 represented. Considering the subsequent adoption of visitor centre buildings by park agencies of all types all over the world, the new building type must be considered one of the most influential public land management strategies ever devised.

At least in professional and critical circles, Mission 66 endowed the Park Service with the highest reputation for architectural patronage that the agency has ever enjoyed. To a great degree this reputation was based not as much on the typical visitor centres designed by in-house forces, as much as it was on a few exceptional examples by well known consulting architects. The firm of Anshen and Allen, for example, in part because of its early critical success with the Sedona Chapel and the Quarry Visitor Center, went on to design Eichler homes and other residences, schools, hospitals, and institutions in California and all over the country. The critical success of the Wright Brothers National Memorial Visitor Center, which opened in North Carolina in 1960, similarly helped launch the Philadelphia firm of Mitchell/Giurgola (fig. 12). Cabot recruited Ehrman Mitchell and Romaldo Giurgola shortly after they left the office of Gilboy, Bellante, and Clauss (the designers of the Yorktown and Jamestown visitor centres) to start their own firm. The architects went on to become major figures in the profession, with an international practice that won the AIA national award in 1976. Giurgola served as the chair of Columbia University’s architecture school and won the AIA Gold Medal in 1982. Even Frank Lloyd Wright’s firm, Taliesin Associated Architects, made a contribution to Mission 66, although five years after its founder had died. The Beaver Meadows Visitor

³⁴⁷ “Analysis Visitor Centers Mission 66,” memorandum, n.d. [1963], (Box A8123, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). All figures are the original, unadjusted costs.

Center in Rocky Mountain National Park, which opened in 1967, indeed proved that great design could find appropriate uses and expression in a national park (fig. 57).³⁴⁸

The most renowned architect to work as a consultant to Mission 66 was Richard Neutra, one of the original figures of the International Style, who with his partner Robert Alexander was asked in 1958 to design two very different park projects. Mission 66 was under particular pressure to address Civil War battlefield parks because of the centennial commemorations being planned for the 1960s. No celebrations loomed larger than those planned for the Gettysburg National Military Park, the site of the war's greatest battle and Lincoln's famous address in 1863. President Eisenhower also happened to own a home and planned to retire in Gettysburg. Planning for a new museum to house a large nineteenth-century "cyclorama" painting of the battle had begun in the 1940s. Civil War historians, park managers, EODC planners and interpreters, and the Park Service Washington Office all agreed that the Ziegler's Grove area of the battlefield—the view point from which the huge, circular painting had been made—was a powerful location from which to interpret the history of the battle and use the cyclorama painting most effectively. Given this location and the necessity of housing the painting, Neutra and Alexander's building took the form of a large, featureless concrete cylinder and a long, low wing extending from it (figs. 13, 14). Dedicated in 1962, the minimalist, geometric abstraction of the building, its overall low massing set partially in the trees, and its sensitive use of fieldstone masonry were intended to harmonize its visual presence in what was an extremely sensitive location in the middle of the battlefield. The procession through the building allowed visitors to experience the painting, and then to emerge onto a roof terrace and view the actual battlefield from the same point of reference. Critics such as Von Eckardt praised the quality and sensitivity of the design. For the Park Service, the collaboration with a world renowned architect on such an important public building marked a high point in the entire Mission 66 architectural design effort.³⁴⁹

The second Neutra and Alexander project for the Park Service was the Painted Desert Community, a combined visitor centre, residential area, and maintenance facility in the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona. In this case the architects produced the most unusual and atypical national park architecture of the entire era. Sited in a remote

³⁴⁸ The Quarry, Wright Brothers, and Beaver Meadows visitor centres were all designated National Historic Landmarks in 2001 for their significance in American architecture. See Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*.

³⁴⁹ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 95-144.

desert with a hostile climate, the new community was designed in a compact geometric layout, featuring row houses and apartments all directly attached to the visitor centre and maintenance buildings in one large complex. The public buildings and apartments together defined a central, sheltered courtyard. The private gardens of the rowhouses were separated by masonry walls, which with other walls in the complex were intended to block the desert wind. The Painted Desert Community was true International Style architecture, with unadorned rectangular massing, large featureless façades, and horizontal windows set in long bands. The dense little community sited in the vast, open desert offered a complete contrast to typical ranch house subdivisions of the period. The entire project was a remarkable departure for the WODC and the entire Park Service, and indicated the degree to which the agency was committed by the mid-1950s to employing the most progressive architectural ideas that the profession had to offer. At least for Wirth and Vint, there were indications that in this case they felt the experiment had not been entirely successful, and that Neutra had not been receptive to suggested changes. The design won a *Progressive Architecture* award in 1959, however, and the Park Service allowed construction on the exceptional and essentially unchanged plan to proceed the next year.³⁵⁰

The locations of Mission 66 visitor centres were carefully considered. Ronald Lee and Dick Sutton outlined different strategies in their joint 1958 notes on visitor centre design, as did Daniel Beard (the former Everglades superintendent) who succeeded Ronald Lee as the chief of the Division of Interpretation in 1960.³⁵¹ For interpreters, architects, and landscape architects (the last group usually being responsible for siting buildings) the importance of the views from the visitor centres was always stressed. Beard in fact criticized the Grand Canyon Visitor Center because it was “too far removed (1/3 mile) from the Canyon rim,” and so failed to stimulate visitors to investigate the canyon’s natural history and ask good questions of the visitor centre staff. This emphasis put interpreters at odds with the intent of Vint’s “Plan B,” which suggested that visitor facilities should be relocated away from “sensitive” areas, such as the rim of the Grand Canyon. Lee and Beard both praised visitor centres that afforded “a good view of park features,” such as those at Yorktown and Hopewell Village. The large visitor centre

³⁵⁰ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 145-180.

³⁵¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Visitor Center Planning: Notes on Discussions Held in EODC November 18-22, 1957, and WODC February 4-6, 1958, unpublished report, n.d. [1958], (National Park Service Denver Service Center Library); Daniel B. Beard, “Report on Visitor Centers,” January 29, 1960 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

window at Hopewell Village, for example, was “in itself a fine exhibit.” The outdoor or roof terraces at visitor centres such as Gettysburg were ideal for interpreters to conduct their programs, allowing visitors to observe the battlefield or other attraction directly in front of them, with supporting interpretive displays and visitor services nearby.

Experienced interpreters knew that more distantly placed visitor centres—regardless of how artful the museum exhibits might be—could not compete with the power of interpreting a site while looking directly at the landscape being discussed.

Architect John Cabot described three specific strategies for visitor centre locations, which more or less echoed what Lee and Beard suggested: at park entrances; “en route” along a major park road or intersection; and at a “terminus” or major destination within the park.³⁵² In larger parks there were often several visitor centres at different entrances and destinations. There was a tension between the desire to remove visitor centres from the “sacred” or “sensitive” areas (where older visitor services had congregated), and wanting to maintain the interpretive strength offered by proximity. At Yellowstone, for example, the Canyon Village and Grant Village developments replaced visitor services considered too close to scenic views and thermal features. But at Old Faithful, a new visitor centre was built with a direct view of the famous geyser. In smaller historic parks, however, where the role of the interpretation was considered even more vital (and in which typically there was only one visitor centre), the building was often located to provide an expansive view of the park landscape. This often meant the visitor centre was near or directly in the “historic scene” being interpreted. Since historic sites were considered more difficult for the public to appreciate, they were also often the subjects of more elaborate interpretative plans. Reconstructions, “living history” reenactments, and other means were sometimes promoted under Mission 66 to “bring history alive.” At Fort Davis in Texas, a partial reconstruction of a barracks served as visitor centre, and at Fort Union in New Mexico (and other similar sites) the visitor centre was designed in a historically inspired idiom and placed immediately adjacent to the archaeological ruins. In historical parks, in particular, interpretation was given priority over concerns for maintaining more absolute integrity of the setting.

Many preservationists, historians, and archaeologists would eventually deplore the locations of some Mission 66 visitor centres, especially those located at “terminus” sites,

³⁵² U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Visitor Center Planning: Notes on Discussions Held in EODC November 18-22, 1957, and WODC February 4-6, 1958, unpublished report, n.d. [1958], (National Park Service Denver Service Center Library).

which came to be seen as encroachments on delicate natural features and historic scenes. If the Gettysburg Cyclorama was a flagship of the Mission 66 program, it also became a symbol of what many came to see as a willingness to value interpretation and visitor experience above the stewardship of park landscapes and archaeological resources. Historian Robert M. Utley, for example, who served as chief historian from 1964 to 1971, remarked in 1985 that “we weren’t very conscious in those days of how we might be interfering with the preservation of the resources,” noting that the Fort Union visitor centre was put “practically right in the middle of the fort.” Recalling Roy Appleman, he remembered that “his interest was primarily in interpretation,” and that he “believed in putting the visitor center right on top of the resource.” At Chaco Canyon and elsewhere, Appleman “always argued that you had to see virtually everything from the visitor center.” In 1985, echoing a general sentiment at the time, Utley concluded that such priorities were “outdated now.”³⁵³ But such reconsideration of policy on the part of Park Service historians and other staff came mostly after Mission 66, and especially in the 1980s, when modernist architecture was also being negatively reevaluated. During Mission 66, the architecture and siting of visitor centres—and the general emphasis on interpretation—was widely approved both within the agency and by others. And it should be noted that many Mission 66 visitor centres are not necessarily “on the resource,” at all, but are near park entrances (sometimes on land outside the park and acquired for the purpose), within park administrative areas, or in other locations where visitors could be efficiently intercepted and oriented while minimizing the encroachment on “sensitive” areas.

11.2 Administration Buildings

As a category of development, visitor centres were the most important single category of Mission 66 architectural construction. The new building type was at the heart of revised planning goals and policies for the park system, and the proliferation of the carefully designed new buildings symbolized the entire program. “Administration buildings” also continued to be built, although they rarely had the same importance that prewar administration buildings originally had. At Grand Canyon and Mount Rainier, for example, prewar rustic administration buildings designed by Thomas Vint and his staff of

³⁵³ Richard W. Sellars and Melody Webb, “An Interview with Robert M. Utley on the History of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service, 1947-1980,” September 24, 1985–December 27, 1985, transcript (National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Centre).

landscape architects were sited directly on the village "plazas," where they imbued these central public spaces with the sense and identity of the civic administration of the park. A few Mission 66 administration buildings, such as the Ash Mountain Administration Building (Cecil Doty, WODC, and Walter Wagner & Partners, 1962) in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, had similar importance. In these cases, as at Ash Mountain, the building might feature interpretive displays and a "public contact" area, comparable to the information desks of prewar examples. More often, however, new visitor centres combined administrative functions with the park museum idea, replacing the need for either of the older building types.

New "administrative areas" built outside park boundaries to replace the old administration and maintenance buildings in prewar park villages were a more noteworthy example of Mission 66 development for this purpose. The El Portal administrative complex outside Yosemite, and the Tahoma Woods area outside Mount Rainier, for example, were intended to replace the administrative and maintenance functions in Yosemite and Longmire villages, respectively. At El Portal, the Mission 66 administration and residential area was later expanded, and now includes a large office and maintenance complex, additional residences, and an elementary school. The Tahoma Woods administrative and residential area has also grown. In both cases, however, the prewar rustic villages that were to be replaced were never demolished. The overwhelming need for maintenance and administrative space, and perhaps the reluctance of park staff to leave their picturesque park villages, resulted in having two administrative areas in these parks. On the other hand, at least the older villages did not grow to accommodate greatly increased maintenance and administrative needs. If this was only a partial victory for Vint's "Plan B," these and other Mission 66 administrative areas outside parks established vital precedents for removing development from parks. These precedents have had great influence on how new park administration and maintenance facilities have been sited ever since.

At Olympic National Park, the intense controversies over timber management and wilderness preservation produced a distinctive approach for developing a national park administrative area. When the park was established in 1938, Secretary of the Interior Ickes and his assistant Irving Brant met with the new park's superintendent, Preston Macy, and other Park Service staff to determine "controlling development policies" for the park. This exceptional meeting indicated the degree to which controversies at Olympic held Ickes's and Brant's attention. The small group determined quickly (Ickes

was there only one day) that the new Olympic headquarters should be built outside the park boundaries, that existing roads were sufficient to provide “reasonable access,” and that no overnight accommodations would be necessary since nearby towns could provide them. In 1940 a new administration building and superintendent’s residence were built in the nearby town of Port Angeles.³⁵⁴ This was an early instance of what Vint would later call “Plan B” master planning, but it had its own origins and inspiration. The U.S. Forest Service, which had administered the former Mount Olympus National Monument since 1909, had always placed its administration buildings in nearby communities rather than in the forests themselves, demonstrating the closer ties between national forest management and local economies and communities. The precedent of Forest Service examples influenced the decision to build in Port Angeles. The new building also showed an interesting stylistic transition. Constructed mainly of wood, it nevertheless featured modernist design details and spatial composition, and perhaps more than any other single building demonstrated the gradual transition between rustic and modernist park architecture.

Of the 257 “administrative and service buildings” built through Mission 66, the variety is considerable, from near visitor centres that function as park headquarters, to small modular buildings serving as office space. Mission 66 administration buildings were also often sited directly adjacent to maintenance yards, which were utilitarian areas usually defined by linear arrangements of sheds or garages defining a central work area. The yards themselves were not functionally different from the utility areas built as part of rustic villages before the war; the buildings were now likely to be built of concrete block, or metal siding, the economical construction materials that characterized most new buildings of these types in the park system (or anywhere else) during the postwar period.

Wirth also counted 218 new “utility buildings” built through Mission 66, a category that included storage buildings and workshops as well as structures that housed equipment for the extensive utility lines and other basic services being modernized, or provided for the first time, in many parks.³⁵⁵ Administrative, service, and utility buildings all had either very limited public access or no public function at all. This was another reason that in many cases standardized plans were considered acceptable. Most

³⁵⁴ “Statement of Controlling Development Policies,” n.d. (Olympic National Park Archives); Irving Brant, *Adventures in Conservation With Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Publishing Co., 1988), 117; Guy Fringer, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History* (Seattle: National Park Service, 1990), 92.

³⁵⁵ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 266-267.

examples of all of these building types, in any case, did not benefit from the level of design attention and detail that public facilities—the visitor centres—were likely to receive.

11.3 Park Housing

Perhaps the most appreciated category of Mission 66 architectural design from the park staff point of view was employee housing: 743 single family and semi-detached houses were built, as well as 496 apartment units. The new subdivisions were typically located near new visitor centres and administrative areas, or they became expansions on existing prewar bungalow-type residential areas.

An important survey regarding housing preferences among park staff and their families was also available to the Mission 66 staff. At the 1952 park superintendents' conference held in Glacier National Park, a group of wives of Park Service employees formed the National Park Service Women's Organization. The women specifically wished to address the substandard housing conditions that prevailed in many national park residential areas. Herma Albertson Bagglely, who as a Yellowstone ranger in 1931 had been the first woman to achieve permanent naturalist status in the Park Service, was elected national chair of the new organization. Married to the superintendent of Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Bagglely, like so many of her colleagues, knew first hand how inadequate staff housing could make it impossible to maintain good morale or retain qualified staff. As head of the Women's Organization, she organized a systematic survey of existing housing data, which was gathered over the next year by women in almost every park with housing. In 1953 the organization submitted a report to Wirth that indicated that 10% of the agency's field employees were living in tents, and 24% were in one-bedroom houses or apartments. Of the latter group, 60% of the units were below "the standard of surrounding communities" in terms of size, basic utilities, and construction quality. Of the 40% lucky enough to be in a two or three-bedroom house or apartment, more than 40% were in housing considered substandard by these measures. The majority of park housing had been built in the 1920s or by the CCC in the 1930s and sometimes lacked modern utilities, including even electricity and running water. The remainder of the housing stock consisted of dormitories, which housed 60% of seasonal employees, and a few "trailers," which Bagglely did not encourage as a replacement for "fixed housing." Bagglely added that the statistics presented a "conservative" estimate of the problem; many Park Service women were proud of managing under difficult

circumstances and wanted to avoid any appearance of complaining.³⁵⁶ But at a time when many Americans were moving into their own ranch houses with attached garages, washing machines, and other conveniences, park staff and their families, not unlike military personnel who were facing a similar crisis, were trapped in housing that represented an earlier set of expectations for the material setting of family life.

Wirth encouraged Bagglely and the other women in her organization and instructed Vint to collaborate with them to produce model house plans that would meet modern social requirements for park families. These requirements were also indicated in Bagglely's 1953 survey. Of the women surveyed, 94% preferred "individual buildings" to multi-unit buildings, citing play space for children and privacy as considerations. There was more diversity of opinion regarding whether "standard plans" for new two and three-bedroom houses should be adopted over custom designs. But 76% favoured standard plans, as long as adequate variations in construction and insulation reflected regional climates. Standard plans provided some stability for women who moved their families so frequently, since they could be reasonably sure of what to expect at their next posting. At a minimum they could know that their furniture and other belongings would fit in their next residence. Attached garages were favoured by 86%, and space for storage in a basement or utility room was a priority for 95%. Opinions were more evenly split on some details, such as the desirability of picture windows, plaster walls, and basements. In their recommendations for Park Service housing design, Bagglely reported that the women agreed that "architectural design should complement the area in which it is built," apparently despite standardized floor plans. No one was asking for any "luxuries," but "all expressed a desire for space," since cramped conditions exacerbated all other inadequacies. They wanted larger houses, and they wanted them sited on larger lots, farther apart from one another.³⁵⁷

Bagglely described the needs and aspirations of women managing households in sometimes remote and isolated settings. They were asking for nothing more than to join the rest of the nation in terms of what was considered standard housing: the two or three-bedroom, single-family detached home. It was hardly surprising that in 1955 Wirth and Vint endorsed standard plans for two and three-bedroom ranch houses, a type that

³⁵⁶ Herma A. Bagglely, "Report of the National Park Service Housing Survey, unpublished report, 1953, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, 113-115.

³⁵⁷ Herma A. Bagglely, "Report of the National Park Service Housing Survey," unpublished report, 1953, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

featured many of the architectural and site amenities Baggle had described.³⁵⁸ The ranch house, probably more than any other type, symbolized a standard of material life that was consistent with what park staff and their families could see in “surrounding communities.” Using a familiar building type also assured that local contractors could be found at reasonable cost, and that contemporary building materials and technology—from slab concrete foundations to manufactured windows—could be effectively employed. The ranch was also flexible: plans could be easily flipped into “right-handed” and “left-handed” versions, and garages, entry portals, and other extras could be added. Different rooflines and siding materials could be applied to reflect local conditions and availability. By 1955, Wirth and Vint had concurred with the National Park Service Women’s Organization on the basic outline for residential development in the parks. Over the next ten years the standard plans for park residences would be improved, altered, and reissued several times; but the basic standard would remain the single-family ranch house, built by local contractors who would be given some latitude on construction materials and techniques to reflect economical building methods appropriate to different climates and regions of the country.

Planning for Mission 66 park housing preceded Mission 66 and depended on the suggestions of Baggle and the National Park Service Women’s Organization. In addition to single family units, other types of housing included dormitories and “housekeeping cabins.” In some cases older housing reverted to “seasonal” use (usually of a lower standard) as new year-round housing became available. Many projects involved remodelling prewar “cottages,” or adding bathrooms and modernizing existing housing. In some situations, such as at Dinosaur and Petrified Forest, the architects designing visitor centres were also asked to design associated park housing. There were other exceptional cases that required “special design.” But in general, single family detached housing—soon known as the “Mission 66 ranch”—built through the use of standard (or “stock”) plans, became the ubiquitous symbol of the effort to provide decent housing for Park Service families (figs. 58-60). The 1956 Mission 66 plan announced the goal of building 1,000 units of park housing in the next five (not ten) years, at an average cost of \$18,000. This large an effort, together with congressional cost limitations, required the use of standardized plans. Even using consultants, the Park Service could

³⁵⁸ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 244.

not hope to provide so many individual residential designs.³⁵⁹ But despite the use of standardization (or perhaps because of it) Mission 66 raised the material standard and setting for family life in the parks to a level comparable to what most of the rest of the country was beginning to enjoy in the 1950s.

As was the case with the Capehart and Wherry housing built by the U.S. Army, federal standards and rules, whether specified by Congress in legislation or through policy at the Bureau of the Budget, circumscribed certain limits on Park Service housing construction. The Bureau of the Budget issued "design standards," for example, limiting two-bedroom residences to 1,080 square feet and three-bedroom houses to 1,260 square feet. Cost per unit was raised during the Mission 66 period to \$20,000, but this was still a difficult figure to meet, especially in remote areas with high construction costs.³⁶⁰ Within these limits, however, architect John Cabot in particular wanted to assure that the Park Service developed the best possible standard designs. With dozens of units funded for immediate construction in the spring of 1956, Cabot expressed concerns about the quality of the standard plans that had been quickly assembled following the regional directors meeting in Washington in February 1956. Park housing had been a principal subject during a week of detailed discussions and presentations. Cabot felt the resulting 1956 plans reflected "eastern city thinking," and suggested "mass produced developments surrounded by streets and sidewalks."³⁶¹ Park housing also remained the specific concern of the National Park Service Women's Organization. Wirth continued to support the organization's role advising on park housing, and this became their most important contribution to Mission 66. In response to Cabot's concerns, Herma Bagglely reiterated the conclusions that she had submitted to Vint three years earlier. Park Service women would accept and even welcome standard plans, she again pointed out, because standard plans assured at least decent housing even in remote areas and brought an element of consistency to a lifestyle that demanded frequent moves. Standard plans did not have to mean that exterior sheathing, construction materials, or even rooflines all had to be the same everywhere, however, since local conditions and available materials required flexibility if houses were to fit in with local landscapes and regional climates. Bagglely

³⁵⁹ The final and official decision to use "stock" housing plans in Mission 66 was at the Regional Directors Conference in February 1956. John B. Cabot, "The Design of Park Service Houses," October 19, 1956, memorandum (Box 29, RG 79, National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region, Philadelphia).

³⁶⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Standard Plans for Employee Housing," 1957, unpublished report (National Park Service Technical Information Centre, Denver).

again reported that Park Service women were willing to put up with rough conditions and “primitive” construction, but advised that they would like to see more storage space, separate entrance areas (“mud rooms”), larger kitchens, and more bedrooms.³⁶² Since the Park Service continued to discriminate against women professionals in its design offices (a policy that was only beginning to change in the 1950s), the influence of the Women’s Organization on the design of Mission 66 housing is particularly notable.³⁶³

That fall Cabot issued his own memorandum on “the design of Park Service houses,” in which he described the shortcomings of the housing that was being planned and built in the parks at that time. He was anxious to build on the work of Bagglely and the Women’s Organization and felt their recommendations had not yet been incorporated. Cabot cited the 1956 Women’s Congress on Housing (organized that spring by the Housing and Home Finance Agency) as another opportunity to involve the women who lived and worked at home in the revision of house plans. The Women’s Congress had recommended a size of at least 1,200 to 1,500 square feet, three bedrooms, one and one half bathrooms, a living room, a family room, a kitchen with eating space, and “as great an area of closet and storage space as can be contrived,” according to Cabot. The architect did not seem to be concerned with the architectural style of new housing as much as meeting these minimum material standards, within federal limitations, through efficient design. He urged that Park Service housing plans at the very least needed to meet contemporary expectations, especially among women, for a modern standard of living. He went on to state the “basic fundamentals” of successful housing, whether built by the federal government or not: space should be enclosed to separate rest and quiet areas from daily activity areas, for example, and both indoor and outdoor storage should meet long-term and daily needs. “We have another duty,” he reminded his colleagues, “besides the mass production of houses...to eliminate the distress of no housing at all,” and that was to build houses that would meet the demands and expectations of occupants for the next forty years. He then requested that existing “stock plans” be “held in abeyance” while the WODC and the EODC developed designs that would be “architecturally up to date with current national thinking.” The two offices could

³⁶¹ John Cabot to Supervising Architect, WODC, March 27, 1956, (Box 29, RG 79, Regional Archives, Philadelphia, PA).

³⁶² George F. Bagglely to John B. Cabot, October 16, 1956 (Box 29, RG 79, National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region, Philadelphia). Bagglely was writing on behalf of his wife, Herma. Also see Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, 113-117.

³⁶³ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, 172.

“collaborate to work out plans solving actual conditions throughout the Country and, if possible, arrive at plans and designs that solve many varied conditions of climate and topography.” Cabot believed that Park Service employees were “part of the large American family” and deserved housing that met contemporary national standards at the very least. The question of architectural style, however, went unmentioned in the 1956 memorandum. An assumption was made that park housing would necessarily be comparable in materials, construction, and general appearance to the vast majority of housing being so rapidly constructed at the time by builders all over the country.³⁶⁴

Cabot’s efforts resulted in a set of revised “Standard Plans for Employee Housing” issued in time for the 1957 construction season. Included were five variations on a three-bedroom ranch, and six for a two-bedroom, as well as designs for a multiple unit, an apartment building, and a dormitory. The house variations included split-level floor plans and houses with and without basements. No variations on the plans were to be allowed, except for the locations of porches and garages and other “minor changes.” “Left hand” and “right hand” (reversed) versions of the plans were used as well. All construction was assumed to be “frame wall,” but the choice of sheathing was left open depending on local availability and construction practices. All units were to have a minimum level of material conveniences, including modern stoves and refrigerators, linoleum floors in kitchens and bathrooms, central heating, and connections for washers and driers. Superintendents were to pick preferred plans and submit them to their regional directors.³⁶⁵

In 1958 Wirth observed that “so far we have taken between 200 and 250 park service families out of rundown, outmoded—well, shacks is the right word—and put them in new houses and apartments more suited to the dignity of the job they are performing so ably.” The next year the National Park Service Women’s Organization again undertook a housing survey, this time under the direction of Inger Garrison, the wife of then Yellowstone superintendent Lon Garrison. By February 1959, Garrison observed, 368 new housing units for permanent employees had been built. This put the program on schedule to complete 1,000 units in ten years (not the hoped for five), although the total need was now estimated at almost 1,500 units. The tenor of the 107

³⁶⁴ John B. Cabot, “The Design of Park Service Houses,” October 19, 1956 (RG 79, Box 29, National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region, Philadelphia).

³⁶⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Standard Plans for Employee Housing,” 1957, unpublished report (National Park Service Technical Information Centre, Denver).

survey responses that Garrison tabulated was very positive. About half reported that Mission 66 housing had been built in their parks. In general that half responded positively at a ratio of about five to one to questions such as, "Have the plans been adequate for site placement....number of bedrooms....number of bathrooms....eating space....traffic flow?" The general appearance of the houses were considered "fitting for the location and the Park" by a majority of twenty-five to three. The aesthetic, or style, of the houses was either widely approved or simply not a subject of comment; the major complaint was that nearly flat roofs of the typical ranch were not appropriate in snow country. The respondents continued to show a strong preference for individual houses over multiple units, noting the need for privacy after working long days with fellow park staff who were also often neighbours. The three-bedroom ranch was widely preferred, as was an additional dining area in the kitchen. The 1959 survey of park housing preferences continued to show a strong consistency with the desires and expectations of Americans, generally, during the 1950s, as well as approval of Mission 66 housing policies.³⁶⁶

In February 1960, the 1957 standard plans were revised in an attempt to provide more space and amenities, still within the \$20,000 per unit limit. Five types were now offered: three-bedroom standard, four-bedroom standard, two-bedroom duplex (attached side by side), three-bedroom "superintendent" (slightly larger), and four-bedroom superintendent. The floor plans showed improvement in circulation and organization, with more storage, and a more defined entrance area, in addition to a slight increase (200 square feet) in overall size. Garages were now always attached (they had been detached in some of the 1957 plans). Two-bedroom houses were replaced by the two-bedroom duplex, consisting of two identical house plans (one reversed) linked by adjacent carports. Standard plans now included front elevation sketches, although the choice of siding remained open. The 1959 Women's Organization survey affected the new plans, which now featured entry vestibules with closets, extra storage, and a dining area adjacent the kitchen, as well as a garage with storage.³⁶⁷ The standard plans served as the basis for quickly developing working drawings that necessarily were adapted to an individual building site. By the end of 1963, the process was further standardized with additional

³⁶⁶ Inger Garrison, "Report of National Park Service Housing Survey," 1959, unpublished report, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³⁶⁷ E. T. Scoyen, "New Standard Plans for Permanent Employee Housing," February 17, 1960, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

standard plans designed specifically for hillsides. New standard plans approved in 1964 closely resembled the 1960 ranch houses, although the average number of square feet of living space was reduced, reverting closer to the original 1957 size. By this time, the three-bedroom, approximately 1,200 square foot ranch with attached carport had become a ubiquitous standard.³⁶⁸

In terms of staff morale and the efficient administration of parks, Mission 66 addressed what had been a serious crisis caused by the dearth of staff housing. Housing, however, had no public function, and in fact was rarely ever seen by visitors. Park Service architects and the National Park Service Women's Organization felt that the overall appearance and construction of housing should be "appropriate" in its setting, but almost universally felt that the use of standard plans would not prevent this result. Local builders were expected to use the materials and construction techniques that were consistent with other examples, regionally. If housing were "built of materials and styled to become a part of the individual area," as Baggeley put it in her 1953 report, it would be appropriate in its park setting. The challenge was perceived more as one of providing an adequate material standard of living within cost limitations. This demanded efficient floor plans, modern construction techniques and materials, and the provision of utilities and other amenities. Other categories of Mission 66 architecture that also made use of standardized plans, to a greater or lesser degree, include comfort stations (bathrooms), of which 584 were built, as well as other campground structures. Thirty-nine entrance stations were built and often required individual design; but simple ranger kiosks and roadside interpretive structures could be produced from typical plans by the hundreds.³⁶⁹

11.4 Concessioner Lodges

As had always been the case, park concessioners hired their own architects to help plan and then build their visitor facilities. Park Service officials had the right to approve of the designs, and in fact had a tradition of working closely with concession architects to develop proposals that were true collaborations of private and public sector capital and design expertise. Concessioner architecture nevertheless differed from other types of park building. Concessions served the public, but could only do so if they continued to make a profit, and this reality affected programming and design. Concession capital

³⁶⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Standard Plans for Employee Housing," 1957, unpublished report (National Park Service Technical Information Centre, Denver).

³⁶⁹ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 267.

augmented public spending during Mission 66, but did not reach the same level of importance that it had during the Mather era. While Wirth exhorted his concessioners to invest millions, the business of national park concessioning had changed dramatically since the 1930s, and managing park concessions became one of the most problematic aspects of Mission 66. But some of the earliest and most high profile Mission 66 projects, such as the Canyon Lodge in Yellowstone and the Yosemite Lodge, were developed by concessioners and their architectural consultants. Concessioner architects such as Gilbert Stanley Underwood, Welton Becket, and Eldridge Spencer therefore contributed to the overall image of Mission 66 program to a degree that exceeded the relatively small amount of private investment—about \$33 million—that augmented the overall \$1 billion of federal park spending between 1956 and 1966.

The Park Service relied on concessioner development at Yosemite, as at other parks, to quickly implement key components of Mission 66 construction. In general, concessioner development in Yosemite proceeded with few of the problems being experienced at Yellowstone. At Mount Rushmore, Glacier, and Shenandoah, concessioners also built or expanded employee dormitories, public cafeterias, and other service buildings by 1957, apparently with relatively few problems. The controversial Flamingo development at Everglades was completed that year, and new motel units opened at Glacier, as well. At Mount Rainier, the still contentious decision not to build new overnight accommodations at Paradise continued to be what Wirth described as the “major exception” to the “almost universally favorable” public reaction to Mission 66 that year. Much of the public response Wirth so hopefully characterized in this way was to construction projects that had been quickly undertaken by park concessioners.³⁷⁰

Other Mission 66 concessioner lodges included new complexes built at Grand Canyon, Big Bend, and Glacier Bay national parks. On the south rim of the Grand Canyon, where Cecil Doty and other WODC architects designed one of the earliest examples of a visitor centre, the Fred Harvey Company developed a new motel complex nearby, which also opened in 1957. Ninety-six motel units and a small central office building (replaced in 1972 by a larger lodge building) were sited along a loop road. Together with a vast campground and “trailer village” opened a few years later, the visitor centre and lodge complex made up a new developed area, Mather Village (later

³⁷⁰ Department of the Interior, *1956 Annual Report*, 301; Department of the Interior, *1957 Annual Report*, 310, 344.

called the Mather Business Zone), just east of the historic village of Grand Canyon.³⁷¹ Plans for shifting new visitor facilities to the east, away from the existing village—and away from the “sensitive” canyon rim—had been part of the park’s master plan since at least 1950. The master plan also called for a relocation of the main automotive entrance to area, so that visitors approached from the east not the south. This realignment was completed in 1954. The master plan became the basis for the park’s prospectus in 1956 (the year that park visitation reached the one million mark) and construction continued throughout Mission 66 period, and in fact through the 1970s. By 1973, the “shopping plaza” between the visitor centre and the Yavapai Lodge was enlarged, completing what park historian Amanda Zeman documents as the park’s “Mission 66 Village.” Originally conceived in 1956 more along the lines of Canyon Village, the enlarged commercial area included a general store (1971), bank (1972), post office (1972), and several other buildings set around a large and uninterrupted parking lot.³⁷² By the 1970s, however, it would have been difficult not to compare the Mather Business Zone with many other shopping plazas springing up across the country.

At both Big Bend and Glacier Bay national parks, relatively remote locations and low numbers of visitors resulted in less commercial concessioner lodges. Big Bend National Park was established in 1944 and initial development was minimal, although the CCC built park roads and a camp in the Chisos Basin while the area was still under state jurisdiction. Located in one of the most remote regions of the country, commercial possibilities for a concessioner were limited. Beginning in 1945 Ickes’s non-profit concessioner, National Park Concessions, Inc., provided overnight accommodations in the Chisos Basin, supplementing remaining CCC buildings with government surplus cabins. Beginning in 1950 the Park Service established an administrative area in the Panther Junction area by building staff residences and a maintenance area. But little else was done, and even the official dedication of the park was delayed until 1955. Soon thereafter, Mission 66 called for \$14 million in improvements at Big Bend, resulting in the first comprehensive scheme of development for the park. Over the next ten years, the Park Service built a new visitor centre, staff residences, and other facilities at Panther

³⁷¹ Department of the Interior, *1959 Annual Report*, 328.

³⁷² The extensive Mission 66 construction at the south rim of Grand Canyon National Park also included the Albright Training Centre complex, the Shrine of the Ages, a new maintenance area, a high school, a clinic, many residences, and significant road and utility development. For a full account see Amanda Zeman, “Grand Canyon Village Mission 66 Planning Effort: National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form,” 2003, unpublished report, Grand Canyon National Park.

Junction, as well as secondary developed areas, roads, and utilities throughout the park. In 1966, the concessioner completed the new Chisos Mountains Lodge in the Chisos Basin (figs. 61-66), where the 5,000-foot elevation provided an island of cool moisture in the vast surrounding desert. The complex of modernist lodge building and surrounding motel units had an overnight capacity of 150. With an average of 80,000 visitors year in the 1950s, and only 164,000 visits recorded in 1966, Big Bend never had the same visitor pressure (or the resulting controversies) of other big western parks. The Chisos Mountains Lodge, even after a later expansion, remains one of the best examples of the understated, efficient character Mission 66 planners hoped such "motel-type" lodgings could have.³⁷³

At Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, accessible only by boat and plane, plans for a park lodge went back at least to 1945. But again, the commercial potential for a concessioner was limited. Mission 66 built residences, local roads, and maintenance and administrative buildings in the Bartlett Cove area (near the Gustavus airport), but lodge construction was delayed. In 1960 the Park Service invited potential concessioners to invest \$150,000 in a lodge building, but none felt it was worth the risk. In 1964 Congress appropriated funds to pay for the construction of the Glacier Bay Lodge directly (the only example of public funding used to build overnight accommodations under Mission 66), and a private concessioner was then contracted to operate the lodge. In many ways this was a more desirable scenario, since it removed the complications of possessory interest, bank loans, and the necessity of returning profits on investments. Seattle architect John M. Morse, who had recently designed the Sitka National Historic Site Visitor Center, was hired to design what became perhaps the most striking of the Mission 66 national park lodges (figs. 67-69). Again the complex consisted of a central service building and surrounding motel units. In this case, the surrounding rooms were connected by boardwalks that laced through the trees of the existing forest, helped preserve the site, and kept visitors dry in the exceptionally wet climate. The lodge building itself featured a massive, pitched shingle roof, and a large dining room with views across the cove to distant glaciers and mountains. The asymmetrical pitch of the roof (reminiscent of the outline of the Canyon Lodge in Yellowstone) cantilevered over an outdoor deck. Together with large windows, patterned wood sheathing, and period

³⁷³ John Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend National Park* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 75-81; Ross A. Maxwell, *Big Bend Country: A History of Big Bend National Park* (Big Bend National Park, Texas: Big Bend Natural History Association, 1985), 69-75.

light fixtures and furniture, the Glacier Bay Lodge was a complete statement of modernist rusticity. More than any other Mission 66 lodge, it has retained the intended postwar aesthetic of Park Service architecture.³⁷⁴

Overnight concessioner lodges in national parks, however, in many cases raised the question of why such accommodations were not, as initially suggested by Mission 66 planners themselves, increasingly unnecessary and undesirable. While at truly remote locations, such as Big Bend and Glacier Bay, no alternative was likely to be available, this was less and less the case at Yellowstone, Everglades, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and other parks. When concessioner construction was combined with the improvement of park roads, the expansion of campgrounds, new visitor centres, stores, and restaurants, it perhaps followed that as Mission 66 proceeded, more and more people saw the entire effort as a construction, not a conservation, program. As the economics of automotive tourism reached new heights in the postwar period, some critics felt Mission 66 had given the tourist industry everything it could have asked for, all in the name of public “enjoyment.”

To some degree, the idea of a “Mission 66 Village” that included concessioner accommodations contradicted some of the basic goals of the Mission 66 program. The prewar park village embodied that era’s master planning strategy for dealing with what were then lower levels of automotive tourism. Postwar levels of use, everyone agreed, demanded new approaches. The business of park concessioning had changed, and the necessity for overnight accommodations in many parks was, arguably, disappearing. The Mission 66 modernist park—with its improved roads, expanded campgrounds, visitor centres, and roadside interpretation—offered a means of allowing higher levels of automotive tourism without, hopefully, sacrificing park resources. But the entire idea was undermined if “Plan B” did not replace “Plan A,” but instead was combined with it.

In hindsight, perhaps Mission 66 never should have been in the concession business. In fact Wirth may have had no choice; the inherent compromises and intractable politics of the national park concessioner system, while exacerbated by Mission 66, were not created by it. In any case, compared to other aspects of the program, concessioner lodging was not a particularly large or significant category of

³⁷⁴ Bonnie S. Houston, “Determination of Eligibility, Glacier Bay Lodge Complex,” draft, unpublished report, National Park Service, 2005; Theodore Catton, *Land Reborn: A History of Administration and Visitor Use in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve*, government report, National Park Service, 1995, 264-283.

development. In the end there were just not that many new “motel-type” lodges built, compared, for example, to visitor centres, campgrounds, picnic areas, maintenance yards, or staff residences. But the expansion of the concessioner system struck against the heart of what Mission 66, at least in its most idealistic form, was intended to achieve. Mission 66 concessioner developments also resulted in some of the worst examples of what critics described as “overdevelopment.”

It is also worth considering, however, that the alternative to providing overnight accommodations in parks soon showed evidence of another, possibly even more destructive set of problems. At Great Smoky Mountains and Rocky Mountain national parks, for example, where overnight accommodations were not built, the gateway towns of Gatlinburg and Estes Park grew into resorts anyway, limited only by the few land use regulations that local governments imposed. The development of West Yellowstone into a regional tourism centre makes Canyon Village, today, seem quaint. The fiercely debated sixty-unit motel at Flamingo, similarly, seems innocuous enough compared to the general trends of urbanization in South Florida since then. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of Mission 66 planning was that it failed to anticipate what regional economic development—especially the growth of gateway towns—would mean to the integrity of the national parks themselves in the long run. Where overnight accommodations were kept out, the result was simply more development pressure immediately outside the parks. National parks, as national attractions, generated economic activity in surrounding towns and counties; but Mission 66 planning usually stopped at park boundaries. While boundary expansions and the acquisition of private inholdings were often recommended and implemented, Park Service planners never anticipated that the future health of the park system would depend on engaging local communities as active partners in preserving larger ecosystems and regional scenic character. The concession system, and the whole problem of how and where postwar levels of automotive tourists would find lodgings, needed to be completely reconsidered on a regional basis. But it would have been asking a lot of Wirth and his planners to do so in the political and social climate of the 1950s. Such regional planning remains an elusive goal even today.

Chapter 12: Preservation and Interpretation

12.1 Park Making as Historic Preservation

Conrad Wirth and his planning and design staff conceived of the visitor centre as the “hub” and “city hall” of a park. The dozens of modernist buildings that appeared in the first years of Mission 66 symbolized and facilitated the goals of the entire effort, and they were the single most significant architectural product of Mission 66. But what made the visitor centre a new building type were its new programs and purposes as much as innovative floor plans and construction. The development of interpretive programs and training under Mission 66 was therefore as much part of the program’s design effort as was architecture or landscape architecture. The emphasis on interpretation and preservation and the expansion of professional capabilities and activities in these fields also made Mission 66 the most important federal historic preservation effort between the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Mission 66 historic preservation must be examined in order to establish a comprehensive historical context for assessing the program today.

For landscape architects like Wirth and Vint, historic preservation remained closely linked to scenic preservation. Under Mission 66, planning for the preservation of scenery and history remained parts of one larger project: national park making. “National parks and monuments fall into two groups,” Vint explained in 1946, “natural and historical.” In the former, the primary purpose was “to preserve and protect one of the great works of nature.” In the latter, it was “to preserve and protect the scene at one of the great moments of our national history—to stop the clock and hold the scene of the moment in history that makes the area important.” Whether in the case of scenic or historic preservation, providing for public access and enjoyment remained essential: “The development scheme [master plan] has to do with providing the facilities to permit the people to see and enjoy these areas,” Vint maintained. “It is constantly working on the compromise that determines how far these facilities will intrude into the scenes that are to be preserved, as nearly as possible, as nature or history has left them to us.”³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Thomas C. Vint, “National Park Service Master Plans,” *Planning and Civic Comment* (April, 1946).

For Vint and the Park Service, preserving landscapes was a shared approach for both scenic and historic places. In either case, roads, visitor centres, and other facilities made it possible for visitors to appreciate either natural scenery or historic scenes. In the process the place was preserved through its transformation into a public park. In the late 1920s Vint successfully made the case to Albright that this transformation should be controlled by a unified aesthetic conception—the “master plan”—that controlled and limited the extent of development.³⁷⁶ When becoming director in 1929, Albright held two important goals for his agency: to expand into the management of historic sites, and to control all park development through the enforcement of master plans. These goals were linked, since the effectiveness of the Park Service as a historic preservation agency was achieved through the development of master plans for “national historical parks.” Vint oversaw the development of the first such historical parks, including Colonial (Virginia), Salem Maritime (Massachusetts), and Hopewell Village (Pennsylvania). In 1933 Franklin Roosevelt transferred more than forty battlefields and other historic sites and monuments from various other agencies to the Park Service, an executive order that Albright had personally sought as a means of balancing the park system functionally, and regionally as well, since many historic sites were in the East.³⁷⁷

Until this point, the “house museum” had been the most typical means of preserving history in the United States. Even the Williamsburg Restoration (a private undertaking funded by the John D. Rockefeller, Jr.) could be seen as a vast assemblage of individual house and garden reconstructions.³⁷⁸ The national historical park, however, preserved entire landscapes through their transformation and improvement as public parks. Colonial National Historical Park, for example, consisted mainly of an automotive parkway across the peninsula between the York and James rivers in Virginia. The

³⁷⁶ This essentially Olmstedian theory continued to guide Vint and other officials during Mission 66. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., in particular, had influenced Park Service historical park planning. His 1929 state park plan for California became a procedural blueprint for planning a park system that included both scenic and historic landscapes. See Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., *Report of State Park Survey of California* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1929).

³⁷⁷ Since the 1906 Antiquities Act, Congress had acted to preserve a number of archaeological sites in the West as national monuments, some of which came under the care of the Park Service when it was created. Albright began acquiring historic sites in the East beginning in 1930 with George Washington’s birthplace in Virginia. The Park Service became the leading federal historic preservation agency, however, only after Roosevelt’s 1933 executive order. See Foresta, *America’s National Parks*, 129-145; Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 24-43.

³⁷⁸ Many of these gardens, such as the grounds of the Governor’s Palace, were designed by Arthur A. Shurcliff, a preeminent historical landscape architect of his day, who typified the academic interest in colonial garden research and design. See Elizabeth Hope Cushing, “Shurcliff, Arthur Asahel (Shurtleff), in Birnbaum and Karson, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, 351-356.

parkway connected national park properties at Yorktown and Jamestown, and passed through the Williamsburg Restoration. While numerous historians, restoration architects, and other officials contributed to the overall concept of Colonial National Historical Park, it was the landscape design itself—a parkway—that provided the physical context and continuity between the three, somewhat unrelated historic sites. As Vint stated in the “Outline of Development” of 1933, the parkway would make the park a “single, coherent” entity, and would “transcend mere considerations of transportation...[and] contribute to the commemorative purposes of the monument.”³⁷⁹ The resulting landscape was in no sense a reconstruction of a Colonial era road corridor. Park Service landscape architects and engineers designed a modern automotive parkway in the manner that had been developed by landscape architects in Westchester County and elsewhere during the previous decade. As at the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (which was underway in 1928), the Colonial project combined advanced roadway design with “appropriate” design details, in this case brick veneers over the concrete of the overpass bridges and culvert headwalls. The result was an entirely new landscape—a historical park—that combined new landscape design (the parkway) with the historic house reconstructions, archaeological excavations, and other “restorations” taking place at various sites along the corridor.³⁸⁰ The Blue Ridge Parkway became the ultimate example of this type of park project by showcasing scenes of restored agricultural landscapes and vernacular architecture along a 469-mile route through Virginia and North Carolina. One of the great works of landscape architecture in the twentieth century, it is also one of the most ambitious historic preservation projects ever undertaken. Begun through the New Deal, the massive Blue Ridge project was later greatly advanced through Mission 66 funding.

The development of national historical parks owed more to the techniques of scenic preservation (park making) than to historic house restoration or garden reconstruction. Depression era historical parks and parkways might feature a landscape

³⁷⁹ Quoted in Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), “Colonial National Historical Park Roads and Bridges, HAER No. VA-115,” Michael G. Bennett, project historian (unpublished government report, 1995), 21.

³⁸⁰ For the mutual influence between historic preservation and parkway design, see Timothy Davis, “Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and the Evolution of the American Parkway” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1997); Timothy Davis, “Mount Vernon Memorial Highway: Changing Conceptions of an American Commemorative Landscape,” in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, ed., *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 123-177; Timothy Davis, “‘A Pleasing Illusion of Unspoiled Countryside’: The American Parkway and the Problematics of an Institutional Vernacular,” in *Constructing Image, Identity, and Place: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture LX*, Kenneth Breisch and Kim Hoagland, eds. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 228-46.

restoration, a house museum, or a battlefield, but they did so in the context of a new designed landscape, calculated to present a series of what Vint described as “historic scenes” to the public. For Vint, these individual historic scenes could be best preserved by “stopping the clock” at a particular date of maximum significance. This would prove to be a problematic concept, since few landscapes (as opposed, perhaps, to individual buildings) had such discreet dates of significance. Neither were living, growing landscapes easily “stopped” in time.³⁸¹ During Mission 66, however, new historical parks continued established historic preservation practice at the Park Service. Mission 66 eventually funded dozens of important historical park developments of increased variety and scope, many of which had been begun before World War II.

In St. Louis, for example, preparation of the site for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial began in the 1930s. Municipal leaders had been proposing the “revitalization” of the city’s historic but decaying riverfront district for decades. Most of these plans called for the demolition of scores of nineteenth-century commercial buildings and warehouses, followed by the development of housing, municipal parking, or some kind of public park in their place. In an era before federal urban renewal programs, however, “slum clearance” at this scale was difficult for municipalities to achieve on their own. Local politicians and civic reformers saw their chance to secure federal assistance in 1933, and conceived of a plan for a “national memorial” dedicated to the “men who made possible the western territorial expansion of the United States,” including Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and anonymous “hunters, trappers, frontiersmen, and pioneers.” The memorial was to be designed and administered by the Park Service in partnership with local officials, and would become the means of securing federal funding for the acquisition of the dilapidated riverfront. The intended effects were to remove “blight,” to replace it with an improved memorial park landscape, and to attract new private investment in nearby downtown business districts. Under the powers of the 1935 Historic Sites Act, Roosevelt declared “Old St. Louis” the first “national historic site.” At that point, WPA and PWA dollars were used to fund the complete destruction of

³⁸¹ Just as early wilderness advocates questioned national park development in the 1930s, some contemporary historians wondered whether the new historical parks of that era did not restrict the educational usefulness of historic sites as much as preserve them. See Foresta, *America’s National Parks*, 130. Recent critics have pointed out that freezing a landscape is not only a practical impossibility, it serves as a justification for the removal of later, often significant, landscape features and limits the interpretive potential of a site to a single narrative directly associated with the chosen scene or historical moment. This has been particularly the case in battlefield parks. See Martha Temkin, “Freeze-Frame, September 17, (cont.)

the entire area. When Park Service architect Charles Peterson arrived in 1936, he was reduced to little more than researching and documenting structures as quickly as possible in advance of their demolition. Drury supported the St. Louis memorial plans, against the advice of Peterson and other Park Service staff, and by 1942 all but three buildings of “Old St. Louis” had been razed.³⁸²

In 1937 Park Service landscape architects designed a memorial landscape for the riverfront, consisting of a formal mall parallel to the riverfront levee terminated at either end with neoclassical museum buildings. The central cross axis was marked by an obelisk aligned with the city’s Old Courthouse building, which was not demolished. But the St. Louis politicians and advocates of the memorial project had grander aspirations for their memorial, and in 1945 they announced a national design competition. More than 170 entries were prepared, many by the leading modernist architects of the day, including Walter Gropius, Charles and Ray Eames, and Louis Kahn. Richard Neutra served on the jury selecting the winner. In 1948 Eero Saarinen’s dramatic concept for a slender, 630-foot high arch—a literal “Gateway to the West”—was selected. In the form of an inverted catenary curve constructed with stainless steel, the soaring arch became a modernist icon.³⁸³ The Park Service now was in the position of managing a national historical park as unique as the distinctive arch itself. Forty blocks of historic downtown St. Louis had been demolished and replaced by a huge stainless steel monument surrounded by a park designed by Saarinen’s frequent collaborator, landscape architect Dan Kiley (figs. 70, 71). The modernist landscape commemorated the history of westward expansion, while the original historic structures and landscape features associated with that history were completely erased.

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial had been the inspiration of local advocates who had been searching for the means to redevelop their riverfront since the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. The Park Service became involved as a result of Roosevelt’s direct political interests; the agency never controlled the overall concept for the memorial and did not select the 1948 competition winner. In Philadelphia, however, the Park Service was drawn into another revitalization of a historic downtown, and in this

1862: A Preservation Battle at Antietam National Battlefield Park,” in Paul A. Shackel, ed., *Myth, Memory, and the American Landscape* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 123-140.

³⁸² Regina M. Bellavia, *Cultural Landscape Report for Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri* (Omaha: Government Printing Office, 1996), 11-25.

³⁸³ The St. Louis Arch, completed in 1965, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987 for its significance in American architecture. Harrison, *Architecture in the Parks*, 471-482.

case the agency had more comprehensive involvement. Independence Hall and a cluster of other eighteenth-century buildings still existed in downtown Philadelphia, surrounded by 200 years of urban growth. Local civic leaders again sought to improve economic conditions and attract private developers to the declining core of the city by demolishing a considerable portion of it. Independence Hall had been the subject of pioneering preservation efforts since the nineteenth century, however, and the destruction of this national shrine and other historic buildings nearby was not contemplated. Instead local advocates envisioned preserving and restoring the eighteenth-century buildings, while removing only the nineteenth and early twentieth-century structures around them. New parks and open spaces would replace the more recent buildings, creating what was felt to be a more appropriate and historical setting. By the 1920s proposals had been made to demolish three blocks of buildings immediately to the north of Independence Hall in order to create a monumental vista. In the 1930s the New Deal and the Historic Sites Act seemed to offer opportunities to implement ambitious local plans, and by the end of the decade Park Service planners were studying the feasibility of establishing a national historical park.³⁸⁴

Agency officials, especially chief historian Ronald Lee, were supportive of the establishment of a national park and worked in close partnership with Philadelphia's municipal government, businesspeople, and preservation advocates. In an exception to his wartime policy to suspend such designations, Roosevelt established the national historic site in 1943. In 1946 Park Service planning quickly regained momentum. The next year architect Charles Peterson was reassigned to Philadelphia, joined by agency historian Roy Appleman, to research and document the area to be affected. In 1948 the Philadelphia National Shrines Commission, a coalition of local business interests, preservationists, and municipal officials, made a report to Congress recommending the creation of a national park. Their plan called for extensive demolitions of nineteenth and twentieth-century buildings, and featured a second open vista, or mall (this one extending east from Independence Hall) as well as other open spaces around the older buildings to be preserved. Congress established Independence National Historical Park that year, and in 1949 authorized almost \$4 million to fund the condemnation and demolition of buildings to create the new park landscape.³⁸⁵ In this case, however, Lee and other Park

³⁸⁴ Constance M. Greiff, *Independence: The Creation of a National Park* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 29-52.

³⁸⁵ Greiff, *Independence*, 40-69.

Service officials had successfully offered legislative amendments that gave their agency more control over the planning and operation of the new park. As historian Constance Greiff observes, “they wanted to assure that the errors that had been committed at other sites,” notably George Washington’s birthplace and St. Louis, “did not recur in Philadelphia.”³⁸⁶

Over the next decade, Ronald Lee in particular maintained close oversight of the planning for what was widely considered the nation’s most significant historic shrine. But the process necessarily involved extensive collaboration with Philadelphia preservationists and city planners who were actively involved in other aspects of the urban renewal effort. In the early 1950s, for example, city and state government funded the demolition of the three blocks of buildings north of Independence Hall to create Independence Mall, which finally created the desired straight, open vista back to the historic building. At the same time Charles Peterson was devising plans for Independence Hall and the historic buildings and areas immediately to the east. With the state funded demolitions underway and his experience in St. Louis still fresh in mind, Peterson pointed out some basic problems with the existing approach to historical park design. The purpose of the new national park had been defined as interpreting and preserving buildings associated with eighteenth-century American history, and so the “period of significance” ended in 1800. The park’s boundaries also included significant works of nineteenth-century American architecture, however, that would now be demolished to create open spaces to the east of Independence Hall. Peterson felt many of these buildings were worthy of preservation, and in any case another formal mall creating a second vista back to Independence Hall would be out of character with the dense pattern of streets and buildings that had always surrounded the building. But in 1953 Wirth, Lee, and Vint came to Philadelphia, and in a conference with Peterson and local officials they reconfirmed the period of significance of 1774-1800. Following the Park Service reorganization of 1954, EODC chief Edward Zimmer and chief architect John Cabot also supervised Peterson’s master planning effort.

With Mission 66 funding available in 1956, much of the demolition for the national park proceeded over the next year, although further progress stalled over questions regarding the design of the new open spaces (figs. 72, 73). Independence National Historical Park nevertheless became a an emblem of Mission 66: the brochure

³⁸⁶ Greiff, *Independence*, 65.

introducing Mission 66 to the public in 1958 ("Our Heritage") featured a "typical" American family superimposed over an image of the Liberty Bell. Finally in 1960 another Park Service conference was held in Philadelphia during which the details of the master plan were finalized. Lee, now the Park Service regional director in the Northeast, approved a compromise plan that retained some of the more intimate spaces of the original urban street pattern, even after many nineteenth-century structures had been removed. The restored eighteenth-century buildings were still presented in a new park landscape, but that landscape did not feature a formal, open mall.³⁸⁷

12.2 Other Aspects of Historic Preservation

The involvement of Park Service historians, landscape architects, and planners in major urban renewal projects of the postwar era characterized much of Mission 66 historic preservation. The Housing Act of 1956, coming the same year as the Interstate Highway Act and the launching of Mission 66, funnelled hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government to states and municipalities engaged in urban renewal. At the Park Service, Lee in particular saw both the positive and negative potential of these programs. Lee was another Park Service official shaped by his New Deal experiences. He was pursuing his Ph.D. in history at the University of Minnesota in 1933 when he and a group of other graduate students received offers to go to work for the newly organized CCC. Lee worked as a historian for the CCC camp in Shiloh National Military Park, and in 1934 transferred to Washington to assist chief historian Verne E. Chatelain with the details of the Historic Sites Act legislation. In 1935 he began working directly for Wirth as the chief historian of Wirth's CCC state park program, and while still in his twenties Lee was in charge of a major historical research and education program. Lee became the Park Service's chief historian in 1938, and following service in World War II he returned to Washington and quickly became involved in planning Independence National Historical Park. He also was an early organizer and instigator of the 1949 legislation establishing the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In the Park Service reorganization of 1954, Lee became chief of the newly created Division of Interpretation, a position that would be of great significance in Mission 66 planning (although he did not serve on the Mission 66 steering committee in 1955). Lee then moved to Philadelphia to serve as Park Service regional director from 1960 until his retirement in 1966. As

³⁸⁷ Greiff, *Independence*, 96-112.

important as his agency positions were, however, Lee also developed a network of private preservation advocates and pioneered new partnerships throughout his career, as exemplified by his work at Independence. He also headed the Park Service special task force on legislation beginning in 1961 and, through the many organizations and activities in which he participated, he was instrumental in developing the programs and policies that influenced the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.³⁸⁸

For Ronald Lee, urban renewal programs of the 1950s represented both a grave threat and also an opportunity that could not be ignored. Shortly after becoming regional director in the Northeast in 1960, he outlined his hopes for an extensive program of historic preservation and urban park planning in a long memorandum on "Mission 66 in relation to historic preservation, open spaces, and urban renewal." Since 1949 Congress had made millions available for the demolition and redevelopment of American cities, Lee noted, and hundreds of millions more were on the way as cities and states lobbied for federal assistance. Unfortunately "sweeping programs of slum clearance" could "carelessly or ignorantly destroy important landmarks and valuable examples of historic architecture." There had already been "mounting protests" against such actions in New York's Greenwich Village and elsewhere. Indeed by 1960 the destruction caused by urban renewal and urban highway construction had inspired editorial boards and preservation advocates all over the country to criticize the federally sponsored destruction of historic "landmarks." Lee went on to identify a corresponding need for "open space" preservation that was "as urgent as historic preservation" in urban renewal programs; but federal officials had not yet adequately addressed either concern.

Neither the Park Service nor the National Trust were in good positions to deal with the enormous threat to American cities that the federal government had created. The Historic Sites Act, for example, authorized the acquisition of nationally significant landmarks, but that option remained very limited, expensive, and slow to implement. Some critics suggested that the Park Service was too preoccupied with its own properties (and with implementing Mission 66) to effectively organize a response to the national crisis.³⁸⁹ Lee pointed out, however, that the Park Service already had major involvement

³⁸⁸ Papers of Ronald F. Lee, biography, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center. Hosmer documents Lee's career extensively. See Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949*. 2 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981).

³⁸⁹ See James A. Glass, *The Beginnings of a National Historic Preservation Program, 1957 to 1959* (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1990), 3-15. Glass points out (cont.)

in urban renewal plans not only in St. Louis and Philadelphia, but New York, Boston, and Washington, as well. Philadelphia, Baltimore, and numerous other cities had also sought Park Service "advisory assistance on open space in metropolitan areas," which the agency's recreational planners were able to provide in a very limited fashion through provisions of the 1954 Housing Act. For Lee, this expansion into urban planning by the Park Service was justified in order to achieve the "preservation of historic monuments and natural landscape in urban areas where such cultural resources have enormous value, yet may be easily lost in vast programs of urban expansion."³⁹⁰ If the results were limited, they were also significant. Under Mission 66, Park Service participation in the New York City Shrines Advisory Board led to new or redesignated parks at Federal Hall, Grant's Tomb, Hamilton Grange, and Ellis Island, where Lee helped plan an "American Museum of Immigration." Similar participation with the Boston National Historic Sites Commission resulted in the eventual designation of Boston National Historical Park and Minuteman National Historical Park. In his 1960 memorandum, Lee suggested that the Park Service's "contributions to historic preservation and open space protection in urban areas" were becoming "a complementary program to wilderness preservation," and that this was a desirable direction in which the agency should grow. "The perpetuation of nationally recognized historic and cultural values of cities is a worthy objective for the National Park Service," he reasoned, "since it would broaden the "cultural basis" of the agency and make it "more fully national." It would also provide a "service to a tremendous portion of America's population which may never be privileged to visit a western national park."³⁹¹

In 1959 Lee oversaw the publication of a large brochure on the Park Service's "nationwide historical program," titled *That the Past Shall Live* (fig. 74). It was intended to be a companion to another Mission 66 public relations booklet published two years earlier, *The National Park Wilderness*. In Wirth's introduction (probably drafted by Lee) he reminded readers that "more than two-thirds of the areas" in the national park system were cultural sites, and the Park Service not only managed parks, but was also "the

Wirth's reluctance to involve his agency in any inventory of historic sites of local or state significance, since they would not qualify as eventual additions to the national park system.

³⁹⁰ Ronald F. Lee, "The National Park Service and MISSION 66 in Relation to Historic Preservation, Open Spaces, and Urban Renewal," July 28, 1960, (Binder VII, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³⁹¹ Ronald F. Lee, "The National Park Service and MISSION 66 in Relation to Historic Preservation, Open Spaces, and Urban Renewal," July 28, 1960; "Accomplishments and Future Requirements in the (cont.)

primary Federal agency charged...with the preservation of America's historic sites and buildings." Setting a tone that captured the spirit of Lee's collaborative efforts, he observed that historic preservation "must be a cooperative local, State, and national effort....State historical societies, State park departments, and a host of State and local preservation groups" were collaborating with the Park Service and the National Trust "toward the common goal."³⁹² Lee was moving the Park Service into a national role in postwar historic preservation planning, even as the agency was losing its leadership in national recreational planning. He was doing it through collaborative partnerships, advocacy of new legislation, and ambitious historical park projects that tapped into congressional interest in urban renewal. Not all his recommendations were immediately acted upon, but his urban national park initiative suggested features of what future Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall's was beginning to describe as the "New Conservation." Much of the impetus for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as well as the urban national park programs of the 1970s, had roots in the experience of Mission 66 projects such as Independence National Historical Park.

12.3 Mission 66 Interpretation

Mission 66 historic preservation, however, was not limited to large urban projects. The postwar period also saw widespread growth and refinement of park education and orientation programs, which Park Service officials now always described as park "interpretation." Mission 66 became the means of standardizing and implementing educational programs throughout the park system, particularly at scores of smaller historical sites and archaeological monuments that had not yet been fully developed. The ubiquitous Mission 66 visitor centres were the most tangible evidence of the provision of a new standard level of visitor programs. The development of standard practices and professional training in park education and orientation was just as important: with the new buildings they established the basis for how the significance of national park areas was presented to the public. New methods and media for representing and conveying cultural significance also created meanings and institutionalized management priorities.

Historical Program of the National Park Service Under MISSION 66," September 14, 1960, (Binder VII, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

³⁹² U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *That the Past Shall Live* [1959] (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, n.d.).

The interpretation of a site helped define its significance for visitors and park managers alike, and became a fundamental part of the process of preservation.

The word “interpretation” used roughly in this sense had a long history, but by the late 1930s Park Service rangers and historians began to use it consistently to describe their goal of presenting enough scientific and historical context for park visitors to better appreciate the landscapes they saw. While interpretative programs were essentially educational programs, Mission 66 officials used the term to convey their own, perhaps somewhat revised intentions for park education. Earlier educational programs, which operated out of park museums, often gave broader instruction on themes of natural and cultural history. Mission 66 interpretative programs were intended specifically to convey the spirit and significance of an individual site to diverse groups of people trying to appreciate it.

By the late 1940s Park Service officials were already pursuing a number of strategies to reinvent the vocabulary and image of their educational activities. In 1941 the Branch of Research and Information became the Branch of Interpretation, and “interpretation” subsequently became the widespread replacement for “education.” By the early 1950s the functions of old park “museums” were being programmed into the new “public use” and “public service” buildings, soon called “visitor centers.” The new language reflected and was contemporary to the increasingly modernist idiom of park architecture. Park Service uniforms were also completely redesigned in 1947, doing away with the high boots, riding breeches, and closely fitting tunic of a more equestrian era, in favour of shoes, trousers, and a looser, belted jacket. The new uniforms were styled after World War II military issue, just as earlier versions had suggested World War I era uniforms; the familiar round Stetson campaign hat, however, was retained.³⁹³ In 1949 Drury organized an in-house competition for a new agency logo, as well. The winning effort (by landscape architect Dudley C. Bayliss) was never used, but Wirth did not let the matter drop. Upon becoming director in 1951 he adopted a new design by Herbert Maier for what became the familiar arrowhead logo. Used thereafter on publications, uniforms, signs, and buildings, the arrowhead became closely identified with Mission 66 and a powerful image of agency identity in general. In 1965 the arrowhead logo was patented.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Workman, *National Park Service Uniforms: The Developing Years*, 25-30.

³⁹⁴ R. Bryce Workman, *National Park Service Uniforms: Badges and Insignia, 1894-1991* (Harpers Ferry, West Virginia: National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, 1991), 25-30. Wirth recalled in 1968 that (cont.)

Interpretation in the 1950s, however, was differentiated by more than the new look and image of interpretive staff and facilities. When the reorganization of 1954 created a new Division of Interpretation under Lee, this function was once again on the highest organizational level, parallel with Vint's Division of Design and Construction.³⁹⁵ This had been a specific recommendation in the 1953 report that preceded the reorganization, and Wirth fully supported the goal of creating a "unified interpretive organization" by combining "natural history, history, museum, and information" offices.³⁹⁶ Interpretation had become increasingly important for a number of reasons. The development of national historical parks had been an area of great growth since the 1930s, and obviously these parks required historical research and educational programs both to plan and operate them. The historians in Lee's division collaborated with the planners and landscape architects in Vint's division and did the research necessary for historical park master planning. They also designed interpretive programs and provided the content for museum exhibits and interpretive displays. Lee also pointed out that as the national park system grew older, interpretation grew more important, generally. Many national parks were entering what he called an "interpretive stage," meaning that much of the work of acquiring, planning, and developing them was being completed. Even if parks still required modernization and expansion of facilities, the basic footprint of roads and other development had been decided. But the importance of operating and managing parks—above all interpreting them to the public—continued to increase. Describing the mandate for parks as they entered this "mature phase," Lee quoted Aldo Leopold, who suggested the essential task was to "improve the quality of park use." For Lee, "a boring interpretive program" made for a "low quality public use."³⁹⁷

Wirth shared Lee's conviction that improving and expanding the interpretation of the park system to the public should be a central goal of Mission 66. As Mather and Albright had in the 1920s, the director believed that the special, national significance of the park system needed to be carefully conveyed by his agency through programs, displays, and above all through individual interpreters. Wirth made interpretation the

Maier prepared the prototype for the arrowhead logo and presented it at the Park Service conference held at Yosemite in the fall of 1950. It was adopted by widespread approval at the conference and then officially approved by Drury. Conrad L. Wirth to George B. Hartzog, Jr., June 5, 1968 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

³⁹⁵ Olsen, *Organizational Structures of the National Park Service*, 77.

³⁹⁶ Conrad L. Wirth, "Objectives for Service Program of Interpretation in 1954," February 16, 1954 (Box 12, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

single most important programmatic aspect of his postwar development campaign. Mission 66 did not sponsor major original historical research, nor did it initiate new scientific or ecological perspectives on the management of park resources; but it did provide more than 100 visitor centres and myriad other facilities specifically designed around the needs of park interpretation. Wirth, Lee, and most of the planners and superintendents participating in Mission 66 planning all agreed that developing ranger programs, brochures, and audio-visual presentations, and building roadside displays, amphitheatres, nature trails, and visitor centres would assure that park visitors found enjoyment and inspiration in their experiences of national park landscapes and historic sites. Mission 66 was planned not only to avoid the physical damage larger crowds caused, but to assure that as few people as possible failed to experience and fully appreciate the special significance of every park in the system.

Interpretation was a particular concern for Wirth and Lee during the years immediately before Mission 66. Between 1953 and 1955 they published four instructional brochures for interpreters: *Talks*, *Conducted Trips*, *Campfire Programs*, and *Information Please*. The first two were written by Howard Stagner, who after 1957 became chief of the Branch of Natural History in Lee's Division of Interpretation. The short booklets offered mainly practical advice on the conduct of park programs.³⁹⁷ But Wirth also had frank and direct intentions for how interpretation could be used to as an "offensive weapon in preventing intrusion and adverse use of areas." In a 1953 memorandum (which Lee and other staff, such as chief naturalist John E. Doerr, probably drafted) Wirth outlined new goals for interpretation that related directly to those soon formulated for Mission 66 itself. Interpretation, the memorandum stated, should serve both parts of the agency's mandate: it should enhance enjoyment by providing information, but it should also protect from impairment by encouraging better appreciation of park resources and a more sympathetic understanding of the threats to them. Interpretation should "point out specific ways in which the visitor should participate, to his own greater benefit, in proper park use and conservation." Harm was done out of ignorance, Wirth insisted, and rules were violated mainly because the need for them was not adequately explained. "Lessons in park use and conservation,"

³⁹⁷ Ronald F. Lee, "Comments on the Role of Interpretation in the National Park Service," February 16, 1961 (Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, Box 22, RG 79, National Archives).

³⁹⁸ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 85. The brochures are available at the National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

generally, could be drawn from specific instances and situations in a given park. If “threats to park integrity” were explained to visitors, they would be more likely to abide by restrictions, such as staying on trails and off of delicate meadows. The “conservation interpretation objective” was simple: “give the visitor a personal knowledge of park and monument values, such as an awareness of park principles and values, and...an awareness of his own responsibility” so that “he may take intelligent action, whether it concerns his own behaviour in the parks, or...after he leaves.”³⁹⁹

After becoming a division chief in 1954, Lee was able to use his position to help give Mission 66 its emphasis on interpretive facilities and programs. He continued to identify the goals of interpretation with those of Mission 66 itself. “The extent to which public use...can safely increase during the next ten years without adversely affecting the preservation” of the parks, he wrote in 1955, “is directly dependent upon an effective program of information and interpretation.” If the vast and changing public understood and appreciated the parks, they would “enjoy and use them wisely” and help protect them. Providing “information stations, publications, exhibits, campfire talks, conducted trips, roadside displays, audio-visual presentations, and other means” could improve the “mental attitude, appreciation, and understanding of the visitor.” Two “twin” initiatives, “equally essential to accomplish MISSION 66,” therefore were necessary: “planned physical development, and park interpretation for wise use.” Lee was concerned that the postwar public’s “higher education levels” and exposure to more sophisticated media (especially television) challenged park interpreters to revise their methods and standards. Americans were also increasingly diverse and “city-bred,” creating a greater imperative to instruct them in appropriate and safe behaviour in wilderness areas.⁴⁰⁰ Lee also expressed concern over the fate of what had become, in some parks, extensive collections of historical, archaeological, and ethnographic artefacts. Most parks had never had the personnel or facilities to adequately catalogue and store, much less properly display, their collections. There was an overwhelming need to develop “specialized technical treatment...to preserve these collections” as part of Mission 66.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Mackintosh reprints the entire memorandum in an appendix. Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 105-111.

⁴⁰⁰ Ronald F. Lee, “Interpretation,” draft memorandum, October 17, 1955 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

⁴⁰¹ Ronald F. Lee to Roy E. Appleman, December 6, 1955 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Ronald F. Lee, “Special Objectives for Interpretation in the National Park System in 1956,” January 10, 1956 (Box 6, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

Wirth and Lee also strongly believed that increased “automation” and new technologies would be needed to meet the challenge of providing standard levels of interpretive programs throughout the park system (fig. 75). Increased staffing was vital as well and was a planned aspect of Mission 66. But considering the demands being placed on the Park Service, even if Congress made the requested increases in the number of employees, other strategies would still be needed to handle the anticipated levels of visitors. Although nothing could replace personal contact with a ranger or interpreter, there simply never again would be enough of them in proportion to visitors to rely on personal interactions as the primary means of interpretation. Already in 1952 Lee began an audio-visual training program for interpreters, and the Jamestown and Yorktown visitor centres in Colonial National Historical Park were the first to feature auditoriums with projection rooms for showing interpretive films (a practice that had already begun in nearby Williamsburg).⁴⁰² In 1955 he began “experimental” use of “audio-visual devices...to supplement the personal interpretive services” in a selected group of parks. By 1956 he was asking EODC chief Edward Zimmer to make sure that all preliminary planning for visitor centres be coordinated with the Division of Interpretation to assure that the new facilities met the requirements of film and slide projectors.⁴⁰³ By the next year “self guiding tour systems” were available at a number of Civil War battlefields, and professionally printed “self-guidance publications” were replacing mimeographed handouts in many parks. At Yosemite, Great Smoky Mountains, and other parks, “self-guiding trails” were developed.⁴⁰⁴ “Visitor-activated” interpretive devices (recoded interpretive talks) were designed, and by the early 1960s ninety parks featured “audio stations” and automatic movie or slide programs. Automatic audio or audio-visual presentations became standard features of new visitor centres, alleviating the enormous task of giving thousands of visitors a basic introduction and orientation to a park.⁴⁰⁵

By the mid-1950s, national park interpretation also found its most eloquent literary voice, the journalist, novelist, and playwright Freeman Tilden. Wirth was particularly taken by Tilden’s reflections on the national parks and their significance, beginning with *The National Parks: What They Mean to You and Me* (1951). Wirth arranged in 1953 to have Freeman’s next book, *The Fifth Essence*, published through a

⁴⁰² Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 145; Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 85.

⁴⁰³ Ronald F. Lee, “Audio-Visual Space Requirements in Visitor Center Buildings,” memorandum, November 9, 1956, memorandum (Box 29, RG 79, National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region).

⁴⁰⁴ Department of the Interior, *1957 Annual Report*, 328.

⁴⁰⁵ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 38-45.

private donation and distributed to all parks and field offices.⁴⁰⁶ The “fifth essence” Tilden describes was the spirit of a place that the interpreter sought to evoke and convey to an audience. In 1955 the Park Service secured another private grant to support Tilden’s “reappraisal of the basic principles which underlie the program of natural and historical interpretation.”⁴⁰⁷ Over the next year Tilden toured the park system observing programs and working as an interpreter. Ronald Lee oversaw the project, which culminated in 1957 with Tilden’s next book, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, which became essential text for national park interpreters during Mission 66 and afterwards. In it Tilden further clarified the activity of interpretation—conveying the significance of a place to a diverse group of visitors—as opposed to conducting a class or lecturing on a broad theme. He established “six principles,” including injunctions to “relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor,” and to “present a whole body, not a part.” The “chief aim” of interpretation, for Tilden, was “not instruction, but provocation.” If Wirth and Lee fashioned bureaucratic and functional tools for park interpreters, Tilden vividly described the inspirational spirit of their work.

12.4 Training for Interpreters

Tourism to historic sites grew enormously during the 1950s, an era that became known for veneration of American “heritage.” Park Service training and interpretive programs supported and responded to the popular trend.⁴⁰⁸ Training a new generation of national park interpreters was a priority for Mission 66, and in 1956 Wirth instructed Lee to draw up plans for the operation of two “National Park Service schools” for the instruction of park staff. In 1957 an agency task force identified a critical need for training “all uniformed employees (park rangers, naturalists, historians and archaeologists)” and suggested a basic curriculum. A new National Park Service Training Centre was established in Yosemite Valley that year, under the direction of Frank Kowski, who since 1951 had headed agency training programs from Washington.⁴⁰⁹ Kowski’s new program effectively reactivated Harold Bryant’s Yosemite

⁴⁰⁶ Conrad L. Wirth to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., December 3, 1953 (Box 23, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

⁴⁰⁷ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 85-86.

⁴⁰⁸ See John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 194-205.

⁴⁰⁹ *National Park Service: The First 75 Years* (Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1990), 42.

school that had operated from 1925 to 1953. The training centre marked the first comprehensive attempt by the Park Service to train its incoming uniformed employees, all of whom were to spend three months there “as soon as practicable after their appointment.” This was not considered an adequate or permanent solution, however, and a larger, more comprehensive training centre was already being planned.⁴¹⁰ Mission 66 provided the funds for a new training facility at Grand Canyon National Park, which was completed in 1963. Named for Horace Albright, the new Grand Canyon complex featured classrooms, offices, a library, and apartments for students. The next year, an eastern counterpart opened on the campus of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, a historically African American institution that had closed in 1955. The eastern training centre, dedicated to Stephen Mather, was housed in rehabilitated college buildings. Together the Albright and Mather training centres institutionalized the methods and intentions of natural and historical park interpretation as developed under Wirth, Lee, Tilden, and Kowski. For Wirth, the establishment of permanent institutions to train the next generation of Park Service interpreters and “stewards of our heritage” fulfilled one of his highest priorities for Mission 66.⁴¹¹

Even under Mission 66, however, getting substantial funding for personnel training apparently proved difficult, especially during the first half of Mission 66. Congress proved resistant to hiring adequate interpretive staff at all. By 1959 Park Service personnel assembled for a conference in Williamsburg unanimously agreed that “lack of sufficient personnel” remained the “most serious deficiency in NPS interpretation.”⁴¹² Mission 66 failed during its early years to meet goals for increasing staff, in general. In 1960 “cumulative staffing increases amounted to a only a little more than half the number of additions scheduled during the first four years of MISSION 66,” according to a training manual being developed in Lee’s division that year.⁴¹³ John Doerr

⁴¹⁰ Task Force on Professional and Technical Training, “Survey of Employee Training,” March 7, 1957; Conrad L. Wirth, “National Park Service Training Centre,” June 18, 1957 (Box 12, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); “Selecting and Training the Stewards of Our Heritage: An Improved Personnel Program for the National Park Service,” draft, n.d. [1960] (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Department of the Interior, 1957 Annual Report, 312; Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 85.

⁴¹¹ Amanda Zeman, “Grand Canyon Village Master Planning Effort,” draft National Register of Historic Places multiple properties nomination, February 24, 2003 (National Park Service, Grand Canyon National Park).

⁴¹² “Staffing Requirements—SUPER MISSION 66,” September 14, 1960 (Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, Box 22, RG 79, National Archives).

⁴¹³ “Selecting and Training the Stewards of Our Heritage: An Improved Personnel Program for the National Park Service,” draft, n.d. [1960] (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

reported similar difficulties that year, noting that “interpretive services” in his natural history programs were up 54%, but that most of that increase “was attributable to self-guiding facilities” such as the “A-V cabinets” installed in thirty-seven visitor centres since 1956. “A-V presentations,” “self-guided tours and trails,” and “wayside interpretive devices” made up 67% of “interpretive contacts” in 1959; 22% of contacts were at information desks and only 11% of contacts were “of the personal type” (ranger talks). Interpretive staffing “lagged seriously” and because of the need to staff visitor centres and deal with a 22% rise in visitation over the previous three years, in 1960 Doerr considered the personnel shortage “more acute now than in 1956.” While a 372% increase in “naturalist personnel” had been called for under Mission 66, only a 7% increase had been realized.⁴¹⁴

Doerr’s complaints did not stop there, and probably reflected similar sentiments among natural historians and scientists both inside and outside the Park Service. Although he felt that Mission 66 had initially acknowledged the importance of sponsoring “research in natural history,” no funds at all had been appropriated for this purpose before 1958, and only \$28,000 annually had been funded for the subsequent two years. Doerr understood the political reality of the situation, suggesting that new legislation “comparable to the Antiquities Act and Historic Sites Act” would be needed to give the Park Service the mandate and budget to undertake “necessary” and “urgently needed” research. From “alpine wilderness ecology,” to “Florida bay marine life,” to “siltation studies” in Mammoth Cave, ongoing in-house research projects were not adequately funded. Outside agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey were doing most of the research in parks, along with university and private non-profit partners. But Doerr felt strongly that “it will be necessary to expand biologist staffing” in regional offices and parks so that the Park Service could identify its own research needs, initiate projects, and coordinate research by outside entities.⁴¹⁵

Mission 66 obviously was planned and run by specialists in park design and interpretation who had their own expertise and priorities. But Doerr was probably correct in observation that new legislation would probably be needed if Congress were to see the Park Service no longer as primarily a park development and management agency, but also

⁴¹⁴ “Condensation of Visitor Services, Natural History Program,” October 17, 1960 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

⁴¹⁵ “Condensation of Visitor Services, Natural History Program,” October 17, 1960 (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

as a scientific research organization. Wirth could have been an effective advocate for new legislation, since he was well known for his relationships with members of Congress and his ability to secure appropriations. He had gained that reputation, though, by sensing and working within the political limitations of his time. Mission 66 exploited the willingness of Congress to fund construction projects; eventually it even succeeded in establishing professional training centres and some increases in staffing. Wirth probably felt that Congress would not approve major funding for Park Service scientific research, just as the lawmakers were unlikely to accept the new legislative mandate for national recreational planning authority. Under Mission 66, the Park Service did not fund scientific research, and in fact barely mentioned it at all. Organizationally it fell under Lee in the Division of Interpretation. Wirth and Lee accepted the need for park naturalists to know and contribute to natural history as part of their interpretive duties, but the little research funded by the agency rarely extended beyond the studies needed to enhance interpretive programs. The idea of scientific ecological research guiding fundamental agency management policies and decisions remained unrealized and even undiscussed.

Even critics in the late 1950s, however, agreed that if new research remained unfunded, at least the construction of visitor centres and other interpretive facilities had proceeded efficiently. Park Service architects at the WODC and EODC had responded to the changing needs of interpreters and museum exhibit designers. Ronald Lee actively helped negotiate the exchange of ideas between interpreters and architects by organizing the two conferences that brought his division's personnel first to the EODC in 1957, and then to the WODC in 1958. The results of these conferences were, as noted previously, a reassessment of the entire visitor centre concept in response to the programming requirements of park interpreters. Audio-visual and other "automatic devices" were seen as one answer to the dearth of interpretive staff, and architects accommodated them in the new buildings. Exhibit designers reconceived the purpose and context of their displays, which now typically made up one part of the larger, more diverse functional programming of the visitor centres. Museum staff (also in Lee's Division of Interpretation) no longer designed exhibits as comprehensive, illustrated narratives, as much as effective, concise orientations to specific parks. As national park historian Barry Mackintosh observes, older park museums "were viewed as supplemental to the visitor experience," but "visitor centers—multiple use facilities emphasizing orientation—were

seen as integral to it.”⁴¹⁶ The change was analogous to the difference that officials attempted to define between “education” and “interpretation.” The visitor centre and its exhibits were vehicles of the latter. Modernist design expressed the same shift in purpose and program.

A number of commemorative anniversary dates also shaped Mission 66 historic preservation and interpretation. The visitor centres at Jamestown and Yorktown, for example, had been completed because of funding made available in time for the 350th anniversary of the British settlement of Virginia. The Abraham Lincoln sesquicentennial was observed in 1957, and the Theodore Roosevelt centennial the next year, followed by numerous other anniversaries. Civil War battlefields were of particular interest during Mission 66 because of the events and commemorations being planned for the centennial celebrations of that conflict. At many Civil War battlefields, the basic development and interpretation of the landscape had changed little since the late nineteenth century. Wirth and his Mission 66 planners intended to have every Civil War site ready for the increased attention and visitation they could expect in the coming decade. Planned improvements often included the acquisition of abutting land, as well as the construction of new visitor centres and roads. A former general was in the Whitehouse, and Congress was in a mood to commemorate the nation’s bloodiest war, creating a Civil War Centennial Commission in 1957. In their first report, the commissioners cited the goals of Mission 66, which they felt would “dovetail with the objectives of the Centennial.” Between 1961 and 1965, local, state, and national commemorative events were held in forty states. At many of the most critical sites of the war, including Gettysburg, Antietam, Harpers Ferry, Chancellorsville, Appomattox, and others, Mission 66 visitor centres opened in time for centennial observances. At Harpers Ferry and Ford’s Theatre in Washington, extensive historic structure restorations were begun. Four new Civil War parks were acquired, and 3,000 acres were added to the more than thirty national parks that related to the conflict.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 45-54; Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 150-156.

⁴¹⁷ U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission, *Guide to the Observance of the Centennial of the Civil War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1959); “Mission 66: To Make Your Civil War Tour Memorable,” *Civil War Times* 3, no. 3 (June 1961): 12-14; U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission, *The Civil War Centennial: A Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968).

12.5 Precedents for a National Register

The development of national historical parks and historic sites that were, or became, part of the national park system obviously dominated much of the Mission 66 historic preservation effort. The historian James Glass asserts that “during Wirth’s tenure the Park Service operated an inward-looking preservation program...that enhanced its own historical monuments and parks,” but failed to provide the leadership needed to curb the excesses of federal highway construction and urban renewal.⁴¹⁸ But there were Mission 66 preservation initiatives of consequence that involved historic resources outside the national park system. Vint, for example, grew increasingly interested in historic preservation later in his career. When Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman awarded him his department’s Distinguished Service Award in 1952, Vint was cited for three achievements: the “inter-bureau agreement” with the Bureau of Public Roads in 1925; developing the “master plan idea” in the late 1920s; and organizing the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the 1930s.⁴¹⁹ HABS was discontinued in 1942, but under Mission 66 Vint arranged to reactivate HABS, which continued to be administered by his close friend and protégé, Charles Peterson.⁴²⁰ Lee was also able to continue the Historic Sites Survey (which had been begun in 1936 under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act) briefly in 1946, although budget limitations in the late 1940s precluded progress or expansion. Lee then reactivated and expanded the survey in 1957 using Mission 66 funding. In the interim he reconceived the program to become a centralized inventory of all nationally significant historical sites, not just those that might be potential additions to the park system as had been the case originally. The distinction was an important one because it gave the Park Service responsibility for a national register of historic properties that were (and were intended to remain) outside the park system. In 1960 Lee succeeded in classifying these historically significant properties as “Registered National Historic Landmarks,” and the Historic Sites Survey became the National Historic Landmarks Program, still under the authority of the Historic Sites Act. There were no federal legal protections for National Historic Landmarks, but the

⁴¹⁸ Glass, *The Beginnings of a New National Historic Preservation Program*, 6.

⁴¹⁹ Oscar L. Chapman, “Citation for Distinguished Service, Thomas C. Vint,” Papers of Charles E. Peterson.

⁴²⁰ Charles E. Peterson, “HABS—In and Out of Philadelphia,” in Richard Webster, ed., *Philadelphia Preserved: Catalogue of the Historic American Buildings Survey*, xxi-xlvi (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

designations and accompanying bronze plaques became a means of identifying threatened landmarks anywhere in the country, assisting local preservation efforts, and generating a national inventory of sites that merited protection.⁴²¹

The Historic American Buildings Survey and the National Historic Landmarks Program required not only documenting and researching historic buildings and sites, but also building a federal preservation organization and a national network of preservation partners. These two Mission 66 programs established the precedent of a federal list of significant historic resources and, despite their limitations, they maintained the Park Service's position as the nation's historic preservation agency. Mission 66 also created numerous opportunities for architects specializing in the documentation, preservation, and reuse of historic buildings. Historical "restorations and reconstructions" were a major category of Mission 66 activity at scores of national historical parks and monuments, from Philadelphia to Casa Grande. New standards and procedures for the restoration of historic buildings were established, and dozens of architects gained experience that led to the increased professionalization of "historical architecture" as a discipline (fig. 76).

Like Mission 66 itself, however, all of these preservation activities proceeded on the basis of New Deal legislation, in this case mainly the 1935 Historic Sites Act. Lee's strategy was analogous to Wirth's decision to use the Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act of 1936 as the authority for Mission 66 recreational planning. In both cases, very capable New Deal bureaucrats used the legislative tools they knew well to frame the renewed programs and activities of Mission 66. In both cases, critics outside the Park Service continued to point out the need for new legislation that would restructure and broaden federal efforts in these fields. While Wirth was openly antagonistic to 1960s legislation such as the 1963 Outdoor Recreation Act and the 1964 Wilderness Act, Lee cultivated private sector preservationists and supported the efforts that led to the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. Wirth also opposed the early versions of that preservation legislation, however, since they implied that the Park Service would have to take responsibility for inventorying and monitoring historic resources that were only of state or local (not national) significance.⁴²² But largely as a result of Lee's efforts, the 1966 act placed the administration of a new National Register of Historic Places within the National Park Service. The Park Service retained leadership and administration of

⁴²¹ Barry Mackintosh, "The Historic Sites Survey and the National Historic Landmarks Program: A History," unpublished report (National Park Service, Washington, DC, 1985), 27-41.

⁴²² Glass, *The Beginnings of a New National Historic Preservation Program*, 6.

federal historic preservation programs, while in 1962 the agency was divested of similar authority for federal recreational planning in favour of the new Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Despite the controversial siting of some visitor centres and the perhaps “inward-looking” nature of its historic preservation program, Mission 66 advanced federal historic preservation at a crucial time when other federal agencies and Congress were engaged in massive destruction of historic buildings and landscapes. Mission 66 incubated the professional disciplines of interpretation and historical architecture, and greatly advanced staff professionalization generally through the Albright and Mather training centres. Wirth counted 458 historic buildings “reconstructed and rehabilitated” under Mission 66 at a cost of more than \$15 million. The projects varied from a Danish colonial sugar plantation on the island of Saint John, to the Custis-Lee Mansion in Virginia, to Fort Davis in Texas. But the numbers only hint at the influence of projects, such as those in St. Louis and Philadelphia, that initiated later Park Service urban open space and historic preservation initiatives in Boston, New York, San Francisco, and other cities.⁴²³ The invention of the Mission 66 visitor centre and its integral interpretive programming was perhaps the most pervasive preservation concept of all, and has characterized efforts to orient and serve visitors not only by land management agencies, but by institutions of all types, ever since. Mission 66 today most often evokes a physical legacy of facility development, but the program’s less tangible achievements in historic preservation policy and the practice of interpretation may in the end prove to have been more critical in the history of park management.

⁴²³ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 267.